This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

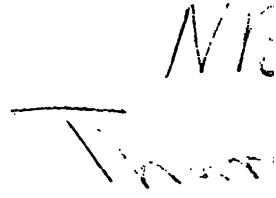
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07609285 1

WHERE THE TIDE COMES IN

LUCY MEACHAM THRUSTON

Asnvat
NEW-YORK
LIBRARY
SOCIETY
1758



Ἀσπνα
NEW YORK LIBRARY
SOCIETY
1758

LUCY MEACHAM THRUSTON'S WRITINGS

MISTRESS BRENT: A Story of Lord Baltimore's Colony in 1638.

A GIRL OF VIRGINIA.

JACK AND HIS ISLAND: A Boy's Adventures along The Chesapeake in the War of 1812.

WHERE THE TIDE COMES IN.

THE LIBRARY OF THE NEW-YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

LUCY MONTGOMERY

A [illegible] Memoir

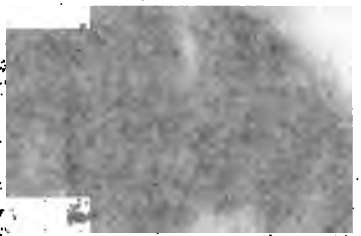
[illegible]

Illustrated by

CH[illegible] NWALD

BO[illegible]

LITTLE, BR[illegible] AND COMPANY



WHERE THE TIDE COMES IN

By

LUCY MEACHAM THRUSTON

Author of "Mistress Brent," "A Girl of Virginia," "Jack and His Island"

Illustrated by

CH. GRUNWALD

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1904

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
148217B
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1941 L

Copyright, 1904
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

All rights reserved

Published April, 1904

THE PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW-YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

F

To

ELIZABETH ELLICOTT THRUSTON

List of Illustrations

"'You know it is extravagance for me to dress so every day'" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"She came back with her hands filled with blossoms and took toll of every flower as they went down the path" . . . . . *Page* 69

"'I brought you here,' he panted. 'I'll strangle the vile breath in your throat!'" . . . . " 264

"'I am going to take you home, home with me'" " 320

"The photograph falling face upwards, her pictured face and bare shoulders gleamed up at her from the white pine floor" . . . . . " 346

"He was so eager, so vehement, the words would not come easily" . . . . . " 388

Where the Tide Comes In

I

"HELLO, Blakey!"

"Boardman! what are you doing down here?"

"Just managed to make it," laughed the newcomer, breathing hard from his run. "What am I doing? Looking after a few things. Where have you been?" The young man whom he had slapped unceremoniously on the shoulder had a suit case in his hand.

"Baltimore." Blakey was never particularly anxious to impart news as to his own affairs.

"Business?"

"No."

Boardman laughed. There was an insinuation in his laugh which aroused irritation. If it was not business, the laughter meant, it was a woman. Who was it he wondered, with the itching curiosity which, as well as his indomitable perseverance, was a part of the man; but he dared not ask.

"Been gone long?" he ventured.

"A day or two. How is everything in the old county?" Blakey asked abruptly, with the evident purpose of changing the subject to something other than himself.

"Fine! You have not been there for a month or two?"

"No."

"Coming up soon?"

"Oh yes," with a tinge of impatience in his tone at the constant questioning. "No kicking about the new constitution?"

"Kicking? By George, no! it's all we want."

"Glad to hear it," said Blakey grimly.

The two men stood on opposite sides in politics, and it was Blakey's party which had framed the new laws.

"Tell you what I have been doing," began Boardman quickly, but broke off to look hastily about him. He had no desire to be overheard, and the ferryboat was crowded.

Tired women, loaded with the bundles of their Norfolk shopping, lounged listlessly on the wooden seats along the narrow barren saloon; children stood on the benches under

the small windows and, with eager faces pressed close against the glass, watched the crowded shipping of the Elizabeth; men bound on errands to the Portsmouth side of the river clustered about the front doorway; where Boardman and Blakey stood, near the centre of the saloon, was as good a place as any which could be found.

Boardman lowered his voice and went on eagerly. "Ever since the constitution has been sworn in, do you know what I have been doing? I ought not to tell you, maybe, but you are out of it, sort of way off down here. Well, sir, I have been organizing the Republican party. That was all we needed, what the constitution gave us. Everything! We can go ahead now: throw the dead load we have been carrying overboard; bring the live issues to the front, and make our fight on them."

There was an impatient movement of Blakey's broad shoulder under his hand, but he never heeded it.

"Yes, sir, there is many a man now on the fence who would have been over long ago —"

"But for your everlasting truckling to the negro."

"Say what you like; it does n't hurt me. There is many a man who knows that we are right on national issues, but who in state affairs does n't dare to show his hand for fear—" He shrugged his wiry shoulders, and the gesture completed the thought which he meant to convey.

"How many men have you got," he added, "who believe in sound money, but for fear of breaking their party lines still vote the same old ticket?"

"Pshaw!"

"You know how you stand yourself," with a careless assurance which irritated to the core; "and as for the tariff—"

"Tariff!" Blakey fairly exploded, but the crowd of might-be listeners kept him within the bounds. "You can't talk that even down here."

"What 's up?" Boardman straightened himself from his confidential pose and eyed the young man shrewdly, a flicker of amusement in his small blue eyes at the annoyance visible in Blakey's face.

"Anything new?" he persisted.

"Oh no; it 's old—old as the tariff—but it 's new down here."

"What 's up?" Boardman repeated.

"One or two around here have been bitten lately; that 's all."

"You?"

"Yes," shortly.

"Then I know you are sore. What is it?"

"Just a little deal." Blakey was plainly on the defensive and unwilling to exploit the matter.

"Cattle?"

"Yes."

"Oh," with an explosive laugh, "then you did get caught; shrewd thing."

"Shrewd!" — there was no keeping back the anger in the other's voice, low as it was, — "with beef so high as it has been selling! We rounded up the country, bought a thousand head, paid the farmers well for them. We did nothing but talk stock-raising, preached stock-raising."

"In this country?"

"Why not? There are acres of land about here waiting for the stock-raiser, land that can be bought for a song and in ten years will be worth a hundred dollars an acre — more than that; land where the grass is green all the

year around, where there is running water, plenty of it. The trucking belt does not run ten miles inland; soil does n't suit, and there is danger of frost; and here is all this land running to waste, and Norfolk is buying beef from Chicago and butter from Pennsylvania."

"Keep that for your newspaper article. How about the cattle?"

"Well, we had them all ready for shipment, prices were way up; they got wind of it somehow in Chicago. The day we shipped prices were lowered, stood lowered a day or two; and we struck that market."

"I see," with a low whistle and still a look of enjoyment of the other's discomfiture in his small eyes.

"I tell you," Blakey went on vehemently, "it is n't the loss of the money I mind — I can stand that if the others can; it 's the loss of the industry. We have been working on the farmers in the country back here for a year or two. Cattle, cattle! We were preaching it all the time; now what will they say?"

"They got their money all right, did n't they?"

"Yes; but they would n't again, and they

know it. There is Martin — was down here on the lookout, fairly had him settled; say stock to him now and he'll laugh at you."

John Boardman had nothing to say. He felt no sympathy, and he dared no chaffing. Blakey was too wrathful to follow up the subject, and there was a minute's silence between them, while the hum of voices around, the churn of the waters, and the rumble of the huge paddle wheels filled the air.

"Tell you what!" exclaimed Boardman at last, blurting out with seeming abruptness the very thing he had made up his mind to say from the first moment of meeting: "Blakey," — he watched him keenly, — "you belong to us; young progressive men like you should be on our side."

"Go to the devil!" Nothing protected Boardman now, neither women nor children. "My father —"

"Yes, and your grandfather and your great-grandfather. I know the whole business. We are not living on our grandfather's reputations now."

"Or you would n't have anything to live on!" blazed Blakey. He had all he could en-

dure, — the assumed intimacy, the taking-for-granted equality, the impertinent questioning on topics it was plain he wished untouched; but this! He caught up his suit case and pushed forward against the men about the doorway, shouldered his way through them and out to the open forward deck.

The fresh air, heavy with salt, cut keenly against his hot face; the sparkle of the water running swiftly to the "Roads," the blue sky unflecked overhead, cooled his anger as, half conscious of them, he watched the busy scene. Before him, on the Portsmouth side, stretched the long curving line of weather-beaten wharves; steamers, tugs, and vessels clustered close about them, their spars and smokestacks cutting into the clear crisp air. As the steamer turned in her course, behind them, Norfolkwards, showed hull and stack and mast pressed so closely together that it looked a city of ships. And between the craft-hidden shores flowed the Elizabeth, ship-cleft, steamer-stirred, the sparkle of her waters beating up between hull and raft, and undulating behind them in long lines of silvery whiteness. Straight ahead loomed the slip of the ferryboat's landing.

Hugh Blakey drew a breath of relief as they ran into it, and the huge gray piles, silvered by wind and rain at their tops and whitened with barnacles at the water's edge, towered above his head and fenced them in to their own wharfage. He watched impatiently while the boat bumped and scraped the piles two feet below the level of the wharf, and listened to the clanking of the great windlass, where one man at the wheel wound the huge chain tighter and tighter, as the steamer crept up, inch by inch, till deck and wharf were one.

Blakey was the first man to pass the gates when the guards pushed them aside, but as he put his foot on the worn brick pavement beyond, the slow tread of a horse's hoof sounded at his side. He looked up; a buggy was abreast of him beyond the iron rail. On the far side of the seat was a man he knew well, a trucker of the Western-branch; and so close that he could have reached a hand across and touched her, a young woman whose face he had never seen leaned forward, watching the jam and press of the crowd as if it were a sight new and strange to her. Her black hair was blown and ruffled by the wind beneath her wide hat's

brim and whipped — a wisp of it — against her forehead; her cheek, neither fair nor dark, was so clear that, with the tint the wind had beat upon it, no coloring might bear it comparison but that of an autumn rose; and her eyes, clear and unshadowed, held a look like still, dark waters which might break into sparkling at a breath. Above it all was a poise of observation, of thought — the look of one who has seen and measured many things, and yet held the heart of a child; whose least thought was of her own personality; who lived in the events of life and knew little of its heart-beats: — the impression was as swift as sight to one who understood women as well as Blakey did.

He leaned over the barrier with an insistent look at the driver for recognition, but the man was intent only on the horse's way; and suddenly, as he gazed, the young woman's eyes met his, sparkled for a moment with pleasure, and then calmly looked elsewhere.

He understood, and he was angered to the quick. He was part of the picture; it did not soften his humor to reflect that he had evidently been a pleasing part. He would compel her to look at him again. But whatever

she thought of the handsome, alert young man keeping pace with their movement, she was apparently as sublimely unconscious as the older man by her side.

Blakey tried again to catch a glance from his acquaintance, to be recognized, perhaps even introduced; her look met his once more, measured him as impersonally as the street vendor ahead of him, and wandered over the crowd as if in search of something new and of keener interest. Blakey stood still, he was so angered; and in that instant the driver, looking from side to side for an opening between drays and wagons and cars in the narrow street ahead, pulled sharply to the right, and Blakey remained gazing at the shining curtains of the buggy's top.

It did not mend his mood; he was gruff to the conductor who welcomed him as he boarded the suburban car waiting at the corner, and he had little to say to the motorman who turned to greet him. Both were instantly aware that something had ruffled his humor. They knew most of the affairs of the dwellers in their suburb, and the people along their route were well gauged.

When the conductor ran out to push the first switch in place, the motorman leaned from his car: "Got kicked, I reckon," he whispered, with a backward toss of his head.

"Looks like it;" and both of them laughed.

There had been a Baltimore visitor in the suburb that winter, and Blakey had been one of her train.

But he had met with no such fate as that which they meted him. He had seen the visitor in her own city less than a day and night before, and their flirtation had held all the charm of a fascinating skirmish between two forces well drilled and well matched; if his fancy had been entangled, he was as heart free as he had always been. Now he was not even thinking of her; his mind was filled with the odds and ends and tangles of business, from which he had been for a while free, until they had caught him again that day in his Norfolk office.

Blakey was the type of man who in business is an idealist. There was no scheme which did not turn its glittering side to him. His newspaper articles, written in pure enthusiasm and without pay, had caused the investment of

western capital in street railways and city improvements; and on their heavy dividends the investors builded anew and flaunted in splendor. They had also been the direct allurement to some half dozen northern farmers to settle in "the cheap corn lands" back of the low, rich acres of the trucking belt; though these, enervated by a warm climate and heavy atmosphere to which they were yet unaccustomed, and meeting a condition of labor to which they could not at once adapt themselves, longed for their bracing native air and said hot words concerning those printed praises and newspaper arguments.

A politician who aided this man and that to office, Blakey himself held none; either because he wanted none, or because that which he would have was as yet beyond his reach. For he was a young man, a boy at the first glance; though at the second, a man who had looked into many things, and showed the signs of his search in the subtle, faint markings, indistinct at first but certain at last, which showed at mouth and eyes and forehead. He knew when one man had made a thousand in an investment last year, another two, a third a fortune: he

let no one guess how often his own pockets were nearly empty.

A happy, care-free, unfettered fellow on the surface, he was, at heart, a man discouraged by seeing way after way closed to his progress, and only crooked paths opening before him; while the ambitions, the aims, the possibilities of his life, dammed up by barriers of circumstance, foamed higher and higher in his heart, threatening disaster.

With these mental visions blinding him to the reality, the car, like a ship on land, sailed through the streets of Portsmouth, past its border of negro shanties, through fresh ploughed fields and by newly built cottages, over a bridge, beneath which the high tide filled the bed of the stream to its full and rippled amongst the sere grasses and brown rushes; by patches of cabbage and broccoli, and then straight down, the sea, beyond the clump of high pines, coming nearer and nearer. They whizzed along the wide streets and by the detached cottages of a suburb; Blakey nodded to the conductor, who had already put his whistle to his lips.

"Pleasant trip?" he asked as Blakey swung

himself off. His passenger started as if suddenly awakened. "Oh yes; very!" he called back with a laugh as he turned down the wide street.

The conductor nodded across the length of the open car to the motorman. "Takes it all right!" he declared as the car sped straight away to the river, gathering speed as it spun, as if for one wild venturous plunge at last into the bosom of the sparkling water. But Blakey's long strides had already carried him out of sight.

II

HUGH BLAKEY was a home lover and a lover of space — of "room to breathe in," he would have expressed it; and he thought, also, that the life of a young man about town was too rapid for him, that the energy he would have thrown into it would have burned out his reserve force too swiftly; therefore he made his home in this far-off suburb, where the wide streets were swept by the salt air.

Before him, as he turned the corner, ran a row of cottages riverwards; a narrow plank walk, a foot above the ground, lay before them like a border, and the withered grasses under it rustled as his firm tread set the boards undulating and echoing. On his right was the wide shell road, and beyond it an open lot, across which trailed the ragged cedars that had marked the driveway to the small farm-house, when, ten years before, the cottage lots were cabbage fields. It was one of those wonderful things Blakey never tired of telling

the clients that came to his little office. "Just look at Northam," he would exclaim; "ten years ago he had a little trucking place out here and was making a living, a good living; any man is bound to do that down here who has any sense — any sense as a farmer, I mean — and has the money; oh, yes, he must have that and muscle; money and muscle and mind are the three m's; if you 've got them you are all right."

"Good Lord! man," one of his hearers had cried; "a man 's all right anywhere on God's earth if he 's got those!"

"Just so," said Blakey, clinching the argument; "but he 's never so right anywhere else as here."

"Hold on!" cried the hearer; "how about that farm?"

"The farm? He bought it for five thousand dollars, trucked on it for four years, making his living off of it, you see, all the while, and then sold the land for eighty-five thousand dollars; that 's all!"

The hearer whistled. "That 's luck!" he cried.

"No more than is waiting for any other man. There 's Pig Point now." Blakey

launched into an elaborate explanation of the houses which were to be built there, the industries started, the electric lines, the ferries, "until we have a belt around the richest spot in Virginia. You can start from Norfolk then and go to Willoughby Spit — one of the most beautiful rides on any electric line in the world — take the ferry to Old Point, the car to Newport News, ferry again over to Pig Point, electric line back to Portsmouth — and there you are! And think of the wealth, the industries in that belt!"

And the hearer being wise had asked, "What are you booming, Blakey? show me your map and quote your prices."

At the end of the street along which the cabbage furrows had run so recently stretched a long pier across the shallows to the wharf sheds on the edge of "steamboat water"; the river was dotted with sails and steamers, and across its breadth loomed the clustering blackness of many hulls huddled close about the coaling wharves at Lambeth's Point. Their lines of spar and smokestack thrust sharply against the reflected westering of the sun, which lay a crimson pathway across the water.

Already the red and white lights were twinkling at the ships' sides like low hanging stars, and already a light showed here and there in the cottage windows.

Blakey had a quick look for each; but both doors and windows were alike blank until, halfway down, a door was flung open and there was a rush of tiny feet down the board to the gate.

"I saw you, I saw you!" shouted the child as she ran to him.

"You did?" he kneeled and lifted her with his free arm; "were you glad to see me?" he questioned as she snuggled against his shoulder.

"I am glad, I am glad to see you!" She nestled closer against him and tilted back her flower-like face. "What did you bring me?" she whispered.

Blakey threw back his head and laughed.

"You promised me," the child pouted.

"I promised you," he teased; "what did I promise you?"

She pulled herself around until she could look into his eyes. "Put me down," she commanded quietly.

He closed the gate behind him and strode up the short walk to the porch.

"I want to get down, please," the child insisted, with the far-away politeness of a grown-up.

"Nellie, listen!" He put his suit case down on the step and pushed her curly head back against his shoulder. "I have brought you — you just ought to see what I have brought you," he whispered into her ear; "it's in here."

"Oh! oh! open it quick!"

"I can't out here," he laughed.

"Come in! come on!"

"Is mamma home?"

"Yes, yes, indeed. Come on, don't wait." She hurried him into the hall.

"Get it quick!" She flung herself down on the floor, her long hair trailing over the leather case, as with much elaborate trouble over clasp and strap, and pretended fumbling among collars and cuffs, he pulled out a tiny box. "Here, Miss Vanity; this is what you said you wanted."

The child opened it with fingers which trembled with eagerness, and gazed at the silver links gleaming in the jewellers' cotton.

"Oh!" she breathed softly, and then she

lifted her long lashes and gave Blakey one admiring look. "O—h!" She stumbled to her feet and backed slowly away.

"Where are you going?"

"Mamma," she whispered; and then with a sudden glad shout, "Mamma, my bracelet! I've got it! Hugh brought it!"

"What? why, Hugh!" The child's mother hurried into the hall, "when did you come? I am so glad to see you; come into the sitting-room."

Betty Carroll pulled aside the portière before the front room door, and the young man entered and settled himself contentedly before the open fire with Nellie upon his knee. "Well, this is a little like home," he said lightly. "Down there," with a wave of his hand in the direction of the cottage where he boarded—"it's all right!" He pulled himself up abruptly.

His hostess laughed; she understood him and was flattered by the recognition of the atmosphere she had tried to create in the small and inartistic house, even though she thought it an impossibility.

She had never forgotten her own first sight of her new home, or the morning when she and

her husband had come to it, like any other wayfarers, by way of the electric cars.

Had they been transported thither by a fairy balloon or a dream-cloud it would have seemed no more unreal — so strange it is to mix everyday things with joy and rapture until they quiver into fear. They had been married the day before, and had come down on the evening's steamer to take possession of a home furnished and locked and waiting for occupancy. The thought of it had throbbed up through the low sound of the organ, and in between the minister's words, and amidst the hum of whisperings and the rustlings of gowns as they went slowly out along the aisle. For it had been years since she had known what a home was. Her brother had stood in place of mother and father and done the duty of both for many years — years spent in a caravansary in winter or a resort in summer, until she was wearied to death of it all and would have hailed with delight the thought of a log cabin which was her own. In fact the cabin had quite possessed her fancy; she had seen beautiful ones among the mountains and by the lake shores, didn't Tom think it would be the best sort of a house to build,

she had asked when the talk of home was first broached. Tom had roared with laughter, and she had been much incensed. Surely it was good enough for her, she had insisted, if it were such an one as she had visited last summer—and Tom had interrupted with a vivid description of such cabins as had come under his observation in the land where they would make their home. She had agreed with him at last. The cabin would not do, she saw; but out in the country where Tom said they would live were there no old houses? They could be made so homelike she knew — those old Virginia residences. No matter in what style of architecture they were built a porch could be put up in front; and with the wide hall it would be sure to have, and the big room on either side, and open fireplaces, what more could one wish? What fun it would be to hunt up old things to match the wide hearths and high ceilings! Surely they could be found in the Norfolk shops! There must be a pair of old andirons and a big sofa for the living-room and white curtains draped at the windows to hide the small and ill-set panes of glass. Tom had listened ruefully, and had finally

said, " I tell you how it is, Betty; we will have to take what is there. I'll do the best I can, but I can't have that old house built to order, you know."

Betty had seen " the best " that first morning, when it was hot and still and the mist of a lowland hung close upon it. A drenching dew weighed the rank weeds which did duty for turf in the narrow yard; wisps of paper and daubs of paint showed how recently the lightning constructor had come that way and left this building to mark his path. The smell of paint and whitewash, of freshly varnished furniture, and of new matting was stifling when Tom proudly unlocked the door and they slipped quickly inside and turned the key upon any curious eyes which might be watching them. It was August, and the heat of all the week during which Tom had been away seemed to be stored in the small rooms. Tom flung open a window. " There are your andirons all right. I would have them anyhow," he announced joyfully, and Betty in the damask chair before the empty hearth had laughed and laughed until Tom lowered the sash and shut in the sound to their walls.

"Oh!" she cried when she found breath for speech; "it 's such a joke!"

She never gave her home another name. Somewhere in a plat of the suburb it might figure as the number of a street; in her own mind it stood named and described by one word — "The Joke." "When I had dreamed such pictures," she wrote her brother gayly. He was across seas at that time; there was a business venture promising much for an agent who might be in China, and he had only waited the transference of his sister to another man's safe hands to be gone.

"My old furniture and big porch and trees and roses and chickens are gone," she wrote gayly. "We are altogether the newest thing you ever saw. We might have picked up this little house anywhere North or West, but I never thought to see it in the South. They say we are invading the North again, but this time with our ideas. I have a secret. I wish we had left this idea behind. The old houses down here — the plainer ones I mean — may be like boxes, but they are square boxes, and this is a pepper box, and it is as hot as the red sort — genuine cayenne I call it in these August days."

"But I am at work on it," she added, "and maybe I shall make something out of it yet."

The "something" she made of it was charming. The doors were stored in the attic which ran over the kitchen and opened from her upstairs bedroom; the pine floors were waxed and polished until the inferior lumber scarcely showed its quality; pale-hued rugs and hangings and low book shelves were comfortable and comforting, even if different from what she had planned.

Tom whistled under his breath and laughed a little as he saw the changes day by day, but he was thoroughly appreciative. So was this young man as he sat and looked at his hostess leaning against the mantel shelf. A big white apron shrouded her skirt.

"Are you busy?" the visitor asked apprehensively.

"Busy!" She clasped her hands in mock pathos. "I went into town this morning, and when I got back—"

"The kitchen was bare?"

"It was indeed! I am cooking supper."

"Oh!"—he made a movement to get on his feet—"don't let me keep you."

"I have finished; there is nothing more to do until Tom comes home. Fortunately," with a mischievous curl of her lip, "our lives do not depend on hot bread three times a day."

Blakey laughed at the thrust; he knew his own taste in that direction and she did also.

"You know what Bob Taylor said?" he asked placidly.

Betty Carroll smiled and shook her head.

"When he came back from his lecture tour up North, he said that he had heard all his life of Mason and Dixon's line, but he had just found out what it meant."

"Well," impatiently, "what was it?"

"The boundary line between hot biscuit and cold loaf bread."

Mrs. Carroll's eyes flashed indignantly. "I was born south of the line," she declared.

"Oh, well!" continued the young man in the sedate manner in which he had been speaking, "Maryland is a little mixed; you may visit one family and find its customs so exactly like your own that you are about to cry 'Hail brother!' and the next neighbor will have pie and preserves for breakfast." He leaned back and watched with delighted eyes the flush on

her cheek; but there was something he saw as he looked which troubled him, a droop of the mouth, a dulness of the frank, kindly eyes. He could not tell what it meant; was she tired? He jumped up and pulled a chair before the blazing logs.

"You are worn out," he declared penitently.

"No, I am not tired." She leaned back in the chair and watched the flames idly. Blakey, apparently, was absorbed in his discussion with Nellie, but he watched Nellie's mother closely. There was an aloofness in his friend's wife, a reserve, an independent mode of living and thinking which made her a most interesting woman to Hugh Blakey.

"Tell me of your visit?" she asked, restless under his look.

Instead of answering her question he asked another. "Do you mind being alone with Nellie all day — are you afraid?"

"Oh, a little!" she answered impatiently, as if vexed with herself for the feeling; "I get scared sometimes, I can't help it. Did you see Belle?" she changed the subject abruptly.

"Yes," Blakey was angry at the red he felt creeping into his cheek, "we saw Lohengrin

together, you know; I never imagined anything like it in my life — such music, such scenery, it was worth the whole trip. That was what I really went for, you know." He spoke eagerly, as if in defence.

"Yes," said his hostess demurely, as he paused for her agreement with his defiant statement.

"That company will never come to Norfolk, it was my only chance." He hurried into a description of the opera, his words stumbling over one another in his quick utterance and giving to his speech the curious effect of stammering.

"You went alone?" Mrs. Carroll teased.

Again he flushed uneasily. "Did not I say that I went with Miss Belle?" And once more he plunged into a talk of opera and german and dinners which was so vivid that she listened, her eyes growing wistful.

It was home he talked of, and the life she had always known. She had never grown into the life of this suburb which had not fitted itself together, so new it was with its incongruous folk from north and west and across seas; come, all of them, to seek their fortunes in a new country.

"It makes me homesick," she declared when he paused, and she turned her head wearily against the high back of the chair.

Nellie slipping from Blakey's knee came cuddling against her, her warm arm about her mother's neck. "What is homesick?" she asked softly, and her mother bent her head lower; there was a quick sting of tears under her lids, and she did not want the child with her eerie insight into human nature to see.

"It 's a mighty hard sick," laughed the visitor, "and it 's difficult to cure. When you grow up, Nellie, you must get married and stay somewhere near home."

"Get married," the child repeated thoughtfully. "I expect to."

"To whom?" He knew her childish worship of himself and listened with pleased vanity for the mention of his name or the shy glance which should betoken it; but Nellie looked at him gravely. "To papa," she answered soberly.

"Well," as Mrs. Carroll's laughter rang through the room, "I must go; my feelings are hurt."

"Who hurt them?" demanded the child, valiant in his defence.

He swung her up in his arms and kissed her and then stood for a moment with a swift look about him and a comprehension of all it might mean — the glowing fire, the ready table, the waiting woman and child; but he broke no commandment in his heart. His quick thought was that such might be for him; not this: yet his glance, read by one who did not know him, might have meant everything. Betty Carroll knew him and knew his thought.

"Why don't you try it?" she asked gently.

"I? I would ask no woman to marry me." His voice was low, and there was a bitter ring in it which few had ever heard.

He turned to leave, but asked, as if it were an afterthought prompted by idle curiosity, "Who is visiting Mr. Nottoway?"

"No one that I know of. I scarcely ever see them," she added hastily.

"I saw Mr. Nottoway driving out home this afternoon, and he had some one with him I had never seen before."

"A young girl?"

"Yes."

"I can't think who it could have been. What did she look like?" she asked mis-

chievously. Blakey's interest in a new face was notorious.

"Dark," he said sententiously; "hair black as an Indian's and pale skin; eyes dark as her hair."

"Why, that's Page," cried Mrs. Carroll. "Surely you know her!"

"His daughter?" Blakey asked with astonishment. "I never saw her before."

"Why — oh yes! I know; she has never been home since you have been living here."

"Where on earth has she been anyhow?"

"At college, you know, and the springs; that was where I met her a year — nearly two years ago now; and last year she went abroad with a party one of the teachers was chaperoning, and so — but have n't you seen her before?" she asked incredulously.

Blakey shook his head. "Never; what is she doing at home now?"

"She has been ill, hurt herself in a game of basket-ball and was laid up in the hospital a month or more; then they sent her home as soon as she could be moved; that is, her father went for her."

"Do you know her well?"

"Yes, I used to; but girls change so," she added doubtfully.

"Been out to see her?" Blakey interrupted.

"No," with a troubled look at the admission, "they are so far out, and I have no way."

"Did you like her?" he asked with a frankness their friendship warranted.

"Indeed I did," she answered enthusiastically.

Blakey picked up his hat, and a smile twitched at his mouth, hidden by his heavy mustache. "Don't you want to go and call on her?" he asked.

Betty Carroll burst into laughter; at last she understood his drift. "I tell you what I will do," she said with quick kindliness. "I will write and ask her to visit me."

"Do," he begged, "and invite me to supper."

"Oh! I forgot, I have no cook!"

"I will find you one," he vowed.

"If you would!"

"How shall I do it?" he asked helplessly.

Betty Carroll sprang to her feet, above everything else she was a splendid mimic. "Mount your charger," she cried, "ride to the head of Herring Row," — a noted negro neighborhood, — "dash down the street, rein up your horse

till he paws the air, and holloa, 'A noration, a noration,'" she threw back her head and put her slender hands about her mouth, "I hereby proclaim a noration that Miss Betty Carroll wants a cook to-morrow morning at six o'clock!"

While she mimicked, Page Nottoway was gazing on the scene which Betty Carroll imitated.

Mr. Nottoway had driven rapidly, but they had to take the long way home, and there had been many delays. The drawbridge over the Western-branch was up and they waited shivering on the bridge for a schooner to glide through. It was late, and the wind, swift and strong and chill over the water, blew cuttingly cold on the high bridge; the river ran dull and gray between its banks. The vessel glided out, loaded above deck with boxes and crates; a wisp of green here and there bespoke their contents. Mr. Nottoway leaned forward watching the cargo keenly.

"Loman has been cutting spinach and lettuce," he said, a tinge of anxiety in his tone, "that's the first shipment of lettuce; quotations

are way up. I hope Jesse has called the hands together. I told him to do it before I left. There is a good deal of spinach to be cut yet, and the lettuce and radishes are about ready for market. Thank goodness!" as the clanking drawbridge sank into place. "You are not cold?" he questioned when they had crossed the bridge.

"Not a bit."

"Nor tired?"

"The idea!"

"I have to drive by the store, you know. I wish I had n't, it 's so late."

He leaned over and tucked the robe tightly about her, and drove on silently and swiftly. But he saw every field they passed and noticed its stage of foliage or growth; saw the cabbages planted in long rows and heeled to the south, with the soil banked well behind them; had a keen glance for the strawberries, acre upon acre, their big under leaves splashing the green coloring of the field with red; and the dull green of the broccoli fields stretching away to brown earth newly ploughed. The road lay white and level before them; fields and houses flew by until they neared a cross road where

a towering pine stood guard; and, turning sharply, a scant hundred yards brought them to the store.

It was sunset now. The great pine threw sombre arms across a sky gorgeous with the hues the sun flung behind him as he slipped slowly down beyond the horizon; a long line of crows flocking homeward showed black against the coloring, and in the coming dusk the road was ghostly white, and the fields loomed dim and dark.

The store and porch were crowded with negro loungers, some with pretence of purchasing, some with no pretence even to themselves except the meeting and chattering at the close of the day.

As Page waited and watched there was the thunder of horse's hoof-beats straight down the road behind her; and before she could lean and look, by her side shot a black horse and a black rider. The negro reined in the horse so suddenly that the animal fell back on his haunches, his feet pawing the air.

"A noration," the negro cried before the horse's feet touched the earth, "a noration, I publish a noration; Mr. Nottoway begins to

cut his lettuce and spinach to-morrow morning at six o'clock!"

"Glory!"

"Glory hallelujah!"

The negroes came streaming out of the store.

"De same ole crowd will be on han'!" shouted Jesse.

"Yaas, chile!"

"Dat dey will."

"I sees de mos' o' you hyar; dem dat is dis minnit not present at de forementioned 'casion you will please take de trouble fer to notify," the high sing-song went on.

"Come 'long, brothah!" called one of the men, skipping out into the wide level road.

"Come 'long, sistah!" as they trooped after him.

"Jine han's all 'round." Around and around flew the sable ring, coat-tails flying, scarfs floating, the skirts of the women flapping in the wind.

"S'lute yo' pahdnahs!" Every dancer bowed low.

"Evenin'," called one, with an exaggerated flourish of his worn hat, to the grinning negro on horseback. "Evenin', Jesse!"

"Forward fo'!" He swung back into place.

"Touch han's an' pass ovah!" Over they passed, dust a-flying, voices singing.

"Back ergin!"

"Han's all erroun'!"

"Git down off dat hoss," to Jesse, "an jine in!"

"'Tention, ladies!"

The negroes shouted and danced and sang; winter was over and the trucking season was begun.

III

THE row of cottages in which Betty Carroll lived ran to the water. The car track cut across the street, and between the glittering rails and the water's edge lay a strip of waste land and a wide, firm beach. A clump of pines grew there, the huge trunks stretching their roots into a silvery sand on which the farmer could grow no blade of grass and which the investor, by no stretch of line or imagination, could convert into a building lot. So the trees stood, with myrtle and bramble crowded close about them, and the dry sea-sand drifting over their sturdy roots, and the winds of heaven singing in their triumphant branches.

It was the one bit of land which the stranger had found to fit in with her vision of the south land — the whispering pines and the deep sand and the blue waters; and for her child it was a treasure house of whose bounty of seaweed and glittering pebbles and strange shells she never

tired. To-day she burrowed in it and heaped it into castles crowned with myrtle and decked with shells; her mother idly watched the shifting scene of the river spread far and wide before her. She leaned against a tree trunk, her hands clasped in her lap, her felt hat tilted over her eyes, a wistful curve about her lips. It was so still, so empty—for her.

Far out the unceasing sails dipped against the blue; steamers from foreign ports and steamers from near-by points, tugs, and fisherman boats, and rafts, and schooners rose and sank and crossed places on their course; but all that surge of travel and commerce on which she looked was far away; it touched her at no point. The waves rippled on the firm beach, and the shallows showed yellow streaks and dappled waves where the color struck up from the sands and the drifts of dull-colored seaweed, coarse and matted. But to-day the beauty of the world held no comfort in the seeing of it. She was homesick for a home which had not been hers since childhood; longing for a mother's face which was but a memory; and pining for the touch of a busy social life which had been all that she had known until her days

were folded away in the cottage up the street. She watched with unseeing eyes the dip of the fishhawk, the sweep of the seagull's wings, and the white wake of the ferry steamer as it crossed her line of vision. The steamer rounded the outer harbor, crossed the mouth of the Western-branch, gathered her passengers from pier and point, and was away into the Norfolk harborage. Now she came close by the pier, stretching not far away, and with a shrill whistle and a swirling of the waters, stopped the beat of her engine's pulse by the wharf.

Betty Carroll watched carelessly; no passenger had gone out on the long bridge and few ever landed there.

The steamer was well on her way again when the straight, lithe figure of a young girl stepped from the shadow of the shed and came with quick footsteps along the gray weather-warped bridge. Her jacket was thrown across her arm, her short skirt left her easy step unimpeded, and she held her head high, looking from side to side in swift enjoyment. The only living thing she saw, at first, was a lazy fisherman leaning in indolent pose against the rough rail and watching the bobbing corks

of the half dozen lines he had flung to fortune and the sea; beyond him a cluster of row boats rocked safely at their anchorage over the shallows. The beach seemed deserted until her gaze, following the glittering curve, fell upon the idlers beneath the pines. Something in the attitude of one of them carried her memory instantly to thoughts of long mornings of such loiterings; she stopped a moment doubtfully, and Betty Carroll springing to her feet, waved her hand.

"It *is* you," cried Page, as she threw her arm about Betty Carroll and kissed her in a fashion whose thorough friendliness warmed her lonely heart. "I was determined to come and see you this morning. I had waited long enough, or been made to wait. Is that Nellie, that great girl?" She slipped her arm through Betty Carroll's with a charming touch of camaraderie and turned towards the pines.

"Nellie," she called from the beach, "you don't know me. Now we have got to get acquainted all over again," she complained with mock seriousness to Mrs. Carroll; but Betty was laughing at her pretended gravity.

"How delightful this is!" Page threw her-

self down on the sand by Nellie's side and unfastened her hat and laid it by her. The fresh wind blew against the mass of her soft, silky, night-black hair and tossed the loosened wisps of it about her forehead. "What a morning to loiter out of doors!"

"Had n't we better go up to the house?" Betty Carroll asked quickly; she feared it was an inhospitable fashion to entertain a guest so far away from the cottage.

"And leave this?" with a gesture of outspread hands towards the wide, sail-flecked water.

The hostess laughed and leaned back against the tree behind her in tranquil pleasure; but Page clasped her hands about her knees in an abandonment of absolute enjoyment and watched the scene as if the spirit of its charm might be dissolved by speech. When she did speak, after a long silence, it was to ask a question peremptorily.

"Why have n't you been to see me?"

"You knew that I was ill," she accused, as Betty Carroll was silent from dismay. "You knew when I came home, and that I was housebound; you knew all about it."

"How?" Mrs. Carroll fenced weakly. "I never see your mother."

"Oh!" with a shrug and gesture which told more than many sentences. "The electric wires around here perform the little bird's mission," she added saucily.

"We have no telephone," murmured Mrs. Carroll, glad of so valid an excuse.

"Telephone?" with a gay laugh, "it's not necessary to depend on that. Have n't you noticed the very remarkable fashion in which things are instantly communicated in this region?" She leaned forward, a sparkle of gay mockery in her eyes, and Betty Carroll flushed as she laughed. She knew; she had been too often a victim.

"Solomon ascribed the agency to his winged messenger, you remember; but here it is wireless telegraphy, telepathy, tongueless gossip, whatever you will." She laughed so merrily that Nellie, who had kept a distance across which the stranger could be scrutinized, crept close toward her.

"You knew all about it," repeated Page reproachfully; "and yet you never came."

"I had no way."

"No way?" Page pointed a convicting hand to the ships before them and the steel rails which shone behind.

"Exactly," cried Betty Carroll nettled. "I can go *that* way to Boston or Cuba or Europe, and *that* way," with emphatic gesture toward the car track, "to the wharf and step aboard the steamer; but when it comes to going five miles out in the country, I can't do it!"

Page held her fingers against her lips to stifle the laughter.

"We keep no horse," added the older woman soberly; "and no one else does around here. I believe I have been driving about an even dozen times since I have been here."

"Then you are going with me," declared Page. "There are some beautiful roads about here, further out in the country; that is, I remember them as such, I don't know how they will look now." Page spoke slowly and as if her thoughts were wandering.

"I hope you are not spoiled for your own country?"

"I? Oh no."

Betty Carroll had spoken hastily and with an unnecessary resentment of what she had

thought Page meant; she was ashamed of the thought, and there was more of sympathy in her manner as she asked quickly, "It is delightful to be at home, is n't it?"

"Oh, it is! It was heavenly at first. I had been in that hospital a whole month, and part of that time on one narrow bed, looking out of one window at nothing but the light, and a very obscured edition of that. I had begun to believe that the blue sky was a dream; and when I got home, to wake in the morning and hear the wind and the trees and the tide on the shore—" She drew a long ecstatic breath.

"But I have had so many people about me lately, since I have been away, you know," she began again in a puzzled way, "and I believe I miss it. We see so few people at home," she added.

Betty Carroll looked at her with a quick look of sympathy in her eyes, but she was too wise to put it into words.

"I don't believe father or mother ever would miss anybody as long as they had each other," she went on half whimsically; "they are so wrapped up in each other. I don't think they

ever miss me; if I had thought so I would never have gone away."

Betty Carroll did not know what to say in the turn the conversation had taken, and she was wisely silent. She listened with keen sympathy to the restlessness which told in Page's manner more than she was aware of. She knew the life the girl was leading in her luxurious home. A hundred yards away from where they sat the beach curved to the mouth of the western branch of the Elizabeth, and the long bridge spanned it from side to side. The sun set that way, and often she stood on the heavy planking of the bridge and leaned against the rail, Nellie by her side, and watched where the crimson river ran like a lane from fairyland, where the gorgeous banners of the sun were flung across its castle walls.

There, up the river, the gleam of its wide porch and its chimney tops showing between the trees, was Page Nottoway's home. The lawn ran smooth to the water, and the Western-branch swept by, curving to make way for the low rich land; halfway around on the other side stole a narrow creek, like an encircling arm.

The big white house was new, built the year before, when the truckers whose places were on the water front made fortunes, because a late frost caught the crops where they were not warmed by the closeness of the waves. The money which Mr. Nottoway had made had gone into new buildings, and for the gratification of luxurious fancies, and formed the beginning of that sum, larger than his daughter dreamed, which had paid her college bills and furnished the sum for her foreign roamings.

Betty Carroll had wondered many times since she had heard that Page Nottoway was at home how she would fit herself into a life at such utter variance from that of busy routine and bright society; and Page herself was vaguely conscious and restless. It was this restlessness which prompted her, when she found her father had to go unexpectedly and unwillingly to West Norfolk for burlaps he had thought already in his barn, to announce her intention of accompanying him and taking the ferry for Port Norfolk. She would get back somehow, she laughingly assured him — he could trust her for that; and her father assented without a question. He had pressing anxiety

clouding any thoughts but those of business; and he turned his horse's head homeward, as the small steamer put off from the wharf, and drove along the level road, between waste fields from which the trucker had been driven and on which the home seeker had not builded, with little thought of his daughter. She had taken care of herself so long, and showed such ability in doing it, that he was willing to trust her now; there were other things he could not trust, and he hurried to the care of them.

"Mother is always so busy," Page went on with the thread of her talk in a manner which betrayed a mixture of whimsical analysis of loved home folk and a vague searching of herself for cause of her half-conscious dissatisfaction. "She always was. I think that is the reason that books, studies, have been so absorbing to me; I had to have some occupation. I remember how often I asked her for something to do when I was a child, and I always got the same answer,—'Run away and play.' If people only knew how tired children get of hearing that! I think she feels the same way now," she added quaintly; "and I am afraid I have forgotten to play—as she would like me."

"You should see her flowers," she said, after a moment's silence; "you were always so fond of them. The conservatory is a mass of bloom, and she will not let me or any one else touch them; and out of doors the hyacinths and jessamine and violets are wonderful."

Page unclasped her hands and filled her fingers with the silvery sand and watched it trickle through. "I am afraid," she said, in a tone which was low and troubled, "that I am not taking it as well as I might. I am just beginning to realize what it means to stay at home the rest of this term. When I go back to college my old friends, those who entered when I did, will be gone; I will have to take my place with the juniors we lorded it over." She laughed at the admission. "And I shall feel so out of place, so rusty. I never told father or mother," she went on, as if impelled to speak out all the matter, "but there was a chance, a fair chance I think, that a scholarship might come my way." Page made a show of bravery, but the quiver of the lip betrayed her. "And then there would have been Berlin next year," — she pretended a touch of bravado, — "and who knows what afterwards?"

She spoke gayly and held her head proudly, but Betty Carroll looked away; her eyes were misty. Nellie creeping closer spoke the words her mother dared not say.

"Don't cry," she begged; "don't cry. Nothing's worth crying about much!" she comforted, with a crumb from her mother's counsel.

She laid her hand on Page's knee, and a tear splashed down on it. The child jumped up in dismay, felt for her little handkerchief, raced to the water's edge, and poised like a bird above it.

"Here," she cried as she ran back, "wipe your eyes, don't let 'em get red. It will make your head ache."

Page, holding the bit of wet linen to her eyes, made a shaky attempt at laughter, and Nellie, close at her feet, looked up with grieved eyes; the child had opened a proud little heart for a new friend where few were allowed.

"I did not know it was in me to cry," Page plead as excuse. "I thought I had forgotten."

"We think we have forgotten sometimes," said Mrs. Carroll sententiously; "but we usually find we have not — when the time comes."

"The time is not now, at least," Page's voice

rang clear. "I ought to be thankful enough to be out of that bed, alive and well. I am." She laid a hand on Mrs. Carroll's knee. "This is no day nor time for blues," — she tilted her chin in the air, — "nor any other time. In fact they are quite out of the fashion. No healthy young woman should indulge in them," she finished demurely, with a sidelong sparkling glance which yet showed through lashes which were wet.

"You are well now?" her hostess asked quickly; "perfectly well?"

"I was never more so in my life. They took care that I should be before I left the hospital. How tired I was of it! How I longed to run away! I have always been so active, you know, and lived so much out of doors."

Page was silent, her hands clasped about her knees, her dark eyes watching the shifting ships, the tumbling waves, the far arch of the blue sky.

Betty Carroll scarcely knew what to say to bring the conversation to commonplace levels. "Your father is busy?" she ventured.

"Yes; the hands came in to-day to cut lettuce and spinach. Then there will be asparagus, and strawberries, and peas, and all the rest."

Page laughed as she repeated the routine; she had not forgotten.

"You know how it will be from now on till midsummer," Mrs. Carroll warned.

"I know."

"Perhaps they may call on you to help."

"I only wish they would."

Betty Carroll's eyes flashed their warm approval at the girl, but Page did not see it; she was thinking of something else.

"Do you play golf?" she asked so unexpectedly that her hostess caught her breath.

"No," she managed to answer.

"But you can learn, you will," pleaded Page fervently. "I am going to get father to have a course laid off for me. You will come and try — I know you will — and bring Nellie. Mother loves children dearly and spoils them to death."

"Are you an example?"

"I? Oh, I scarcely know," she was too intent on her plan to notice this byplay, "and we might have a tennis court. I do believe," with the enthusiasm of a child, "that if we could — if we could do that, I would n't mind — I would n't think so much of other things." Her voice fell at even this allusion.

"Have you asked your father?" asked Betty Carroll, a gleam of amusement in her eyes.

Page turned her head quickly and looked at her with frank, unquestioning eyes.

"No; but he will do it, I know; you will come?"

"When he has laid off the course." Betty Carroll bit her lip to control the impulse of laughter. "Yes!"

"That will be delightful! I am going to see to it as soon as I get home — as soon as I can get hold of father; and I shall let you know the very day it is done. You must come for the whole day, you know. I expect you will make a splendid player. I used to play fairly well, but I am afraid I am in bad shape for it now." Page wrinkled her forehead anxiously and fumbled with nervous fingers at the buttons of her shirt sleeve; she unfastened it and rolled it to her shoulder. Her brow knit into a frown as she clenched her fist and brought up her forearm sharply. "There," she cried, "just look at it, just look; it 's flabby."

The half-hour car whizzed by on the street behind them. Page never looked up, but Betty Carroll did, and pressed her lips tightly on the

laughter bubbling up to them. The only occupant of the car, looking down on the group with startled eyes, had sprung to his feet and come out on the platform. Motorman and conductor were busy in a conversation at the front. He signalled, swung himself off, and hastened back.

Page sorrowfully rebuttoned her sleeve. "It is getting late, I must try and find some way of getting back," she began, when she heard a step in the soft sand behind her.

She turned a startled look on the young man approaching and then on her hostess, but that young woman showed no surprise; she looked demurely expectant. "Why, Hugh," she cried, "what brings you out at this hour? You should be in town, sir; this is Miss Nottoway. Page, let me introduce Mr. Blakey."

IV

"DON'T get up," Blakey begged, as Page sprang to her feet and began to shake the sand from her skirt. "Well, Nellie!" He lifted the child in his arms, rubbed his cheek against hers, and kissed her. "There!" as he put her down and, seating himself on a great root of the tree, leaned forward, a look of boyish pleasure in his eyes. "How glad I am I forgot those papers this morning!"

Mrs. Carroll laughed at his impulsiveness. "If you think you are going to waste your time on us, you are mistaken," she declared, "we are going up to the house."

"I can't really," declared Page hurriedly, "it is so late, I must see about getting home. Whose boats are those? do they belong to that fisherman?"

Mrs. Carroll answered that they were his.

"Perhaps I might get him to take me home. I have never been that way, but I think it might be done, don't you? Won't you go with me to ask him?"

"Wait till this afternoon," Mrs. Carroll begged. "I will see about it myself then."

"If you would wait until four," began Blakey hesitatingly, a note of deprecation in his voice, "or three, I shall be glad — I will be back from town then — if Mrs. Carroll would only be so good as to delegate me," he turned to her appealingly; "that will be best, Mrs. Carroll, don't you think so?"

Page stood a second, the flush of uncertainty on her cheek; but the red showed oddly, as if it glowed through the pale skin and was not painted on it, like the gleam of lamplight through a satin shade.

Blakey made a second offer of assistance in terms which were scrupulously courteous.

"Oh," she said suddenly, with an entire abandonment of hesitancy. "I shall be delighted, it is very good of you to think of taking so much trouble. Father will be astounded." She laughed merrily at the thought of it. "I told him I would get home somehow, now he will see how well I did so."

The shell road was hot and deserted as they sauntered up it in the blaze of the noon-day sunshine, a shimmer of heat rose above it and

hung about the houses, the vacant lots, and the ragged field. The green grass by the plank walk was sprinkled with dandelions, and here and there, in the small yards, spring flowers bloomed. At her own gate Betty Carroll paused and held out her hand; she knew Blakey's shortcomings.

"You are not coming in," she declared gayly. "If you are going to town and coming out again at three, you can just make it. You had better hurry," and she shut the gate upon him, laughing at his surprised discomfiture as she did so.

But he was fully revenged when he stood, a few hours later, in the bow of the frail row boat and pushed off with strong shoves from the shelving beach. Mrs. Carroll stood there, and Nellie; and he looked over the head of the girl in the stern with a look in his eyes which brought to the older woman a swift remembrance of the assurance she had given him that Page Nottoway's acquaintance was not to be lightly won.

Page sat now wellnigh touching him when he slipped into his place upon the rower's seat; and watching her, he forgot the figures on the

beach, the fisherman on the wharf, the far-off surge of ships. The blue water about them was deserted; their boat alone made its way across its gently tossing waves; and the boat held but them. As he rowed he could watch every line of her face, every changing expression. How wide awake she was, and how alert! How charming were the pale white skin that seemed to hold in check a hint of blushes, the red mouth with its wilful curves, the show of freckles upon her forehead, the dark eyes where the iris spread so wide he could scarcely discern the pupil's point, and the gleam of her midnight hair when the sun struck upon it!

He talked as he rowed, vivaciously, boldly sometimes. He was sounding her unknown nature, bringing quick expressions of assent or denial, or a merry laugh at some jest. How her eyes foreshadowed her speech, he had to listen but to the form of her words when she spoke — their nature was already told. Before they had reached the bridge he had mastered the two of her strongest characteristics — a capacity for keen, absolute enjoyment of the pleasure of the hour and a faculty for companionable quiet which was an art.

There, beneath the heavy arches which spanned the mouth of the Western-branch, he slipped his oars; and they slowly drifted towards the shadow between the gray piles, where the barnacles clung, and the seaweed tossed and rose and fell with the waters rippling. Far out on the Elizabeth was the never ceasing shifting of ships and steamers and craft, small and big; nearer, yet far away, the pier they had left stretched into the foreground, deserted; the waves tossed up and up softly and sibilantly, with broken whisperings and stifled hintings of deep mysteries; and the water lapped against the piles.

The boat drifted out into the light on the other side, and the Western-branch glinted and glimmered between its low shores; the whiteness of Page's home gleamed nearer and nearer.

A small schooner lay at the wharf with her sails full set. A wagon loaded with crates of early lettuce and radishes and barrels of spinach was being driven rapidly along the road which curved to the river side of the lawn, and from the wharf Mr. Nottoway was shouting directions to the driver.

"Hurry up there!" as the wagon clattered on the short pier, "back up! back up! Get to work there, will you? take care, stack those crates up forward! Roll the barrels to the middle!" The calls rang across the water and the roll of the barrels from wagon to wharf, from wharf to schooner.

"Look alive there! that 's the last; pull off! Signal the drawbridge!" as the vessel luffed off and caught the wind in her sails. "Good Lord!" he turned with a whimsical groan to help his daughter out of the boat.

"Well, you did get back all right, Page; trust you for that. Glad to see you, Blakey; you rowed over, did you? As long as I have lived here I never thought of such a thing." He talked rapidly and incoherently, his eyes fixed on the schooner's sails until she cleared the bridge.

"There," he cried, with a sigh of satisfaction, as the drawbridge sank into place, "she ought to make it certainly with this wind, two hours to get to Norfolk and a half hour to get the stuff aboard the steamer. That shipment must go off to-night, quotations are way up, stiff."

He turned and picked up his coat — he had

been working in his shirt sleeves — and he seemed suddenly to remember his hospitality. "Glad to see you, Blakey," he repeated. "Go up to the house, can't you? I will be in soon. Page, that telephone has been ringing for ten minutes, for mercy's sake answer it; I have n't a second to spare."

He flung his coat over his arm and hurried off along the road which curved around the lawn and ran straight between his level fields to the county highway.

Page laughed as she turned to the young man by her side. "He talks as if he were worried to death, Mr. Blakey; but don't you believe it. He is absolutely happy; he has been longing for this time to come ever since I have been at home." She did not know that it was a feverish desire for work to begin and end, that he might reap its results. "You will go up to the house? why, you must; you are tired I am sure." She longed to run up the path under the budding trees, but she fitted her step to his until they reached the porch.

"There is the 'phone again, come right into the library, won't you? Sit down." There was an easy chair before the fire and she pushed

it nearer as she spoke. "Oh!" as the insistent whir began again. "Yes," she put the receiver to her ear. "Yes, this is Mr. Nottoway's. Want to call Mrs. Nottoway? I don't think she is in the house; could n't you give me your message?"

"Oh, dear!" she complained aside to the young man watching her intent face, "the voice is so thin; I wish mother were here, but she is out in the field, I know."

She listened with absorbed attention to the message over the wire. "Will you tell me again; I can't quite understand. O—h!" The line between her brows smoothed out, her lip curved as if from delight. "That would be charming. To-morrow! That is so soon—I will see—I will try. I must ask mother. Good-by!"

"It was Mrs. Warner, Judge Warner's wife," she explained as she hung up the receiver. Her back was turned to Blakey and she did not see the look of dismay. "She and mother have always been such good friends, but I have n't seen her for years."

Page came over to the hearth, picked up the tongs, turned the logs, and coaxed them into

a blaze. "There, that is better," she declared as she slipped into a chair before the glowing flames. "This is father's whim, this fire; he declares mother can do anything she likes anywhere else, have any mode of heating; but this is his room, and he is going to have it to suit himself."

Blakey had already taken swift note of a library wellnigh bookless — Page's books were in her own room — but furnished with easy chairs, broad sofas, and a high desk, and wearing an unmistakable air of comfortable living.

"Mrs. Warner says she is going to have a house party," Page announced, reverting to the telephone message. "She has just heard I am at home; after all this time too." She made a pretence of indignation. "She wants to know if I will come; but to-morrow, that is so soon.

"I wonder what they will do," she added as she rested her elbow on the chair and slipped her chin into the hollow of her hand and watched the fire demurely. "Have you ever been to a house party?"

Blakey had, and he knew a few facts about them; he sat straight in his chair, in spite of its lounging lines, and gazed into the fire.

"She says," went on Page happily, "that she has asked some man to come from Norfolk; she does not want to have an odd number."

"It 's dangerous," said the young man grimly.

Page looked at him wonderingly. "And she thinks he might come up on the steamer with me; she wants me to try and guess who it is. Are there many passengers up the Nobjack?"

"Not many."

"You change steamers at Old Point? Well, I will watch and see who comes on. I wonder who it will be?"

Blakey knew, with an instant consciousness which could not have been a deeper conviction. That morning's mail had brought him a note, he had only glanced at it, but every word came back to him now.

"Dear Mr. Blakey," it had read,

"My nieces are here from Petersburg, and I am arranging a small house party for them, quite hurriedly. I will be glad if you can join us on Friday and stay until Monday. A boat will meet you at the wharf. Yours sincerely,

"JULIA WARNER.

"THE GROVE,
"MATHEWS COUNTY, VIRGINIA."

He had answered at once, and he had declined. He was tired of house parties, and he had recently taken a holiday; moreover, a man from Washington had come that day to Norfolk. Blakey had been corresponding with him for a month, writing glowing accounts of a property for sale not far from the city, a farm on the edge of the Dismal Swamp.

It had been put into his hands to dispose of, and he had advertised it widely. This man was much interested, and if he came himself other settlers from his state were likely to follow. The western man had hinted it strongly and had used the suggestion as a means to get better terms for himself. He had the money to pay for it also, Blakey thought, and he himself needed the commission to fill his depleted pockets.

The client had been at his office all the morning, and it was for papers on which he had been at work the night before, and in his haste that morning had forgotten, that Blakey had returned that noon.

He had already arranged for them to go together on the morrow to look at the place, and at that hour Page would be on the steamer

watching with an unconcerned mien, which he could well fancy, for the passenger who would be her fellow guest. When she saw no one whom she could judge to be such, when she reached the grove alone, what would she think?

His thoughts ran on in a constant undercurrent, and he listened to Page, as she talked on light themes, with a manner which was almost stupid. When he arose to go he gave his broad shoulders a shake as if to cast off unpleasant thoughts.

"Must you go?" asked Page. This glimpse of young companionship had been thoroughly delightful.

"I must indeed; it will take some time for me to get back."

"I — I really have not thanked you yet." Her lip curved mischievously. "I am much indebted to you, Mr. Blakey. I did n't know how I was to get back, but I was determined to risk it."

"I hope you will again," he began fervently, but something in her face checked the extravagant expression on his lips. "I shall be delighted to be of assistance at any time," he

THE PROPERTY OF THE NEW-YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

finished more punctiliously, as he held out his hand.

"Oh, let me go down to the wharf with you; you would not condemn me to this?" with a gesture of mock tragedy to the empty hall through which they passed and the deserted porch. "The whole world is out in the field. I wish mother would let me come," she added wistfully.

Blakey laughed. The way in which the women of the community lived in absolute luxury most of the year, and worked as their husband's assistant "in the season" from dawn to dusk, was one of the incongruities to which he was not yet accustomed. "Why won't she?" he asked lightly, as they went down the steps of the porch.

"Oh, she is afraid I will burn or freckle or some such calamity; if she had seen how we lived at college! Well—" she finished the subject with a long-drawn breath and stood looking about her.

The grass on the lawn was vivid green, the branches of the maples were red with blossom buds, and the early flowers of spring were in bloom. The violets by the porch side scented

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

the air, the hyacinths thrust stiff spikes of color and perfume towards the sunshine, and the jessamine swept long arms of yellow blossomings earthwards.

Page looked at the wealth of flowers hesitatingly.

"Mrs. Carroll is so fond of flowers," she began, when Blakey interrupted her eagerly.

"Send her some; it will be a delight to take them."

"Wait till I run into the conservatory. There are some geraniums which mother said I might have." She came back with her hands filled with blossoms, and she took toll of every flower as they went down the path. Her arms were heaped with them when they went out on the wharf, and Blakey, jumping down into the boat, lifted his hands for them and piled them in the bow.

He looked down at the bloom — red and purple and yellow and white — significantly. "Am I to have none?" he asked.

"Of course," startled at her forgetfulness. "Which do you like best?"

"Violets," he answered, looking straight into her eyes.

"Oh!" in a relieved tone, "there are plenty of them; help yourself."

A sudden change in the young man's face warned her that something was amiss.

"The violets are for you, all of them," she called; but he was rowing away with rapid strokes.

He had even forgotten the tactful speech he had planned, in which he would not exactly ask permission to call again, but would leave the way open to be asked. He had not even said good-by. He rocked the small boat with an impatient movement as he remembered, and as he felt the smart of his blistered palms he thanked fortune for a western wind and an outgoing tide.

V

PAGE watched him with eyes wide with wonder. He faced her as he rowed away, but he never seemed to look once towards her; yet he was keenly alive to every swaying motion of the slender figure at the wharf's edge, the blowing of her hair about her face, the undulations of her skirt in the wind, which blew down the river keen and cool at this late hour. She waved her hand and turned away.

Blakey in an excess of shame at his pettishness snatched his soft hat from his head and flourished it in gay, exaggerated fashion, but Page did not see; she was loitering along the short pier shorewards.

The lawn lay before her, and the big modern house with its pillared porch stood like a picture in a wide frame of greenery and bare, tossing branches. The maple tops rocked softly, their red buds dull against the clear crimson of the sunset; the roses were set with

leaf-buds, red and brown and green, folded tightly; the swaying arms of syringa and bridal wreath were delicate green where the sap stole to their farthest tips. The land which had been a plant bed rioted in trees and shrubs and flowers planted by a lavish hand.

Down by the creek were the old buildings, the apple trees, flushed with half-open blossoms, shutting them in from the new. The whitewashed cottage had been home before the modern house was built; but it was now deserted, except for that short time of the trucker's year known as "the season." Then it swarmed with tenants for whom it served as "barracks." It was pleasant loitering along the path through the orchard, by the narrow strip of yard before the old house, and down by the rippling, rush-bordered creek; but her mother was not there, and Page turned to the road along which her father had hurried. Beyond the lawn and the stables she could see the stretch of the fields on either hand.

The drainage ditches showed like heavy lines along their bordering, and the deep cuts by the roadside bore their overflow to the

river, though the river in revenge rose and fell sometimes, when the tide was at the strongest of the year, into the ditches by the road.

The smell of fresh-turned earth was in the air, and the crows scented it and were calling jubilantly overhead; far away on the horizon floated a faint curl of smoke, where, on one of the many tracks girdling the country inland, a train had left a feather against the sky to show the way it had gone. The strawberry rows ran down to the Western-branch on one side, and on the other the broccoli and kale, which had not yet been cut, and the paler spinach and lettuce beds showed squares of coloring against the brown field.

In the spinach field was the hum of workers.

Page saw the flutter of her mother's blue gown and the outline of her bending figure where the barrels were heaped under a slender wild-cherry tree.

Mrs. Nottoway straightened herself, saw her daughter crossing the field, and called to her, "Page, what on earth are you doing out here? want to see me? come on then. Where is your hat?" she chided as soon as Page reached

her, "this weather will ruin your skin. The first thing you know you will be tanned and freckled. Wait till I finish this and I can talk to you."

Mrs. Nottoway slipped the burlap over the top of a barrel filled with spinach, ran the hoop around it, and nailed it firmly in place. "That's done!" she exclaimed in a tone of satisfaction, "now!" She rolled over an empty barrel and sat on it as carelessly as if she had no thought in the world beyond a moment's gossip with her daughter.

Page balanced herself on another and looked at her mother, the corners of her mouth curling with an appreciative yet loving amusement.

"What have you been doing with yourself all day?" asked her mother briskly. "Had a good time? your father says you have been to see Mrs. Carroll. I have been wanting to go and see her myself for two years, but I have never gotten there, I am such a poor visitor." She laughed at the admission. "Church is about all I can manage, after that I want to stay at home. How did you get back?"

Page, with her hands clasped in her lap and one slender foot touching the ground and rock-

ing herself gently to and fro on the barrel, told all of her adventure.

"And Hugh Blakey brought you back? He is a nice fellow, your father says. I did n't know," she admitted with a sigh, "that we had fallen so completely out of the way of the young people. We certainly never intended it, your father and I; but you will have to get acquainted over again for all of us. Dear me, but I am tired! Just as soon as they bring in this lot," nodding to the negroes cutting the plants short at the roots with their sharp knives and piling them into baskets at their sides, "and I head them up, I am going to stop."

She pushed the fair curly hair back from her white forehead, the jewels on her hands gleaming as she lifted them.

"There was a message for you from Mrs. Warner." Mrs. Nottoway looked up quickly. "She is going to have a house party."

"Oh!" Every line of the mother's face was eagerly expectant.

"She wants me to come." Page laughed at the delight in her mother's eyes and her quick question, "Who is going to be there?"

"Her nieces, you say; such pretty girls.

Marian is one of the most beautiful girls in the state. Of course you must go. It will be the very thing. I was afraid you would be a little dull while we were so busy — "

"You should let me help," pleaded Page.

"The idea, ill as you have been, and after all those years in college, and — oh, dear, no; it would n't do." She dismissed the idea irretrievably. "Let me see!" she began dreamily, and rocked herself to and fro, her thoughtful eyes fixed on space.

"There 's your best tailor-made suit and your second best, you 'll need them both; and your white silk, yes, indeed," to a remonstrance from Page, "you will need the very best clothes you have. You don't know how these girls dress. You need n't think that now you are home you will have no use for your pretty dresses; no, indeed, you will want more of them. And that dull brown silky thing which is so becoming to you, and some waists and furbelows; there, that is all. That white silk must be pressed," she declared energetically. "Run along to the house and tell Mollie to do it while she is getting supper, and look over your other things. You have to leave so early in the

morning. I will be there presently. Here are the men coming now. If there is anything else I will see about it when I come in. Run along!"

And Page looking back from the road caught the flash of the diamonds on her mother's fingers as her hands rose and fell and the hammering reverberated through the still air.

VI

HUGH BLAKEY had the difficult fault of mastery by one idea; if that idea were the thing in hand, his vigor and concentration carried all before him; if it were the underthought, he was inattentive and irritable, and the thing which was to be done was ill done.

When, during the next day he found his prospective visitor querulous, investigating, and asking questions as to the railroads, freight rates, and water navigation, his own interest steadily flagged; instead of the freshness of ardor which had prompted his correspondence and on the stranger's arrival deluged him with information, he had to hold himself to the matter by the reins of common sense, by that feeling of obstinate working towards a point so nearly reached that the missing of it would reflect upon his ability, and also by a memory of his purse so nearly emptied by his holiday.

When he drove up to the hotel the second day he was taciturn; his words to the loungers on the street and about the door were few and quickly spoken, and there was a smouldering fire in his dark eyes which boded no good fellowship for the farmer when he climbed into the buggy and settled himself for the two hours' drive to the property on the margin of the Dismal Swamp.

The stranger was left to his own reflections when they had left the city behind them and spun along the road where the glint of water in stream or creek or river glimpse or tide-swept marsh was forever sparkling, distant or near by. A ready tongue might have told him how soon the orchards blossomed in the soft air, how early the berries ripened, what vegetables would catch the markets of the North a month and more before its own gardens provided them, how rich was the dark soil, and would have explained to him the fertility of the loam and the value of the subsoil of clay, what were its possibilities in the hands of a man who was both skilful and thoughtful; but instead he was left to see fields, low, rich, well tilled many of them, many showing ragged edges of weed growth

and lack of careful system, and yet many more which could scarcely be called cultivated; to see houses, small and stiff and straight, on stilts of logs or bricks above the damp soil, clusters of wretched negro cabins by the roadside, and, few and far between, the wide, tree-shadowed homes which his imagination had pictured.

It was a dangerous indulgence for Blakey's purpose. When at last they turned into a lane between furrows where the cornstalks of the summer's growth swayed mournfully in the wind, stopped before a gate which hung half hinged, and walked over the yard where shallow rain pools lurked between the twisted roots of huge live-oaks, the stranger, whose fancy had been lit for months by dreams of southern lands and southern sunshine, felt the glow dying lower and lower as his glance travelled from the desolate house with its low roof, where moss and lichen clung, across the bare fields to the edge of that forest which no man can see without feeling a tinge of its melancholy — the cypress-crowned, moss-draped, serpent-haunted Dismal Swamp.

It was then the young man awoke to a consciousness of what he had done. Every effort

of eloquence must be used to paint this reality in brilliant colors.

"It looks pretty bad," he admitted when their tour of the buildings was finished; "but you are too sensible a man to be affected by that. Think how quickly a place runs down! What would your own look like if it had been left for months untenanted?" he interjected, and then reverted to his first theme. "*You* can see below the surface, see things as they really are. Look at those fields!" as they stood in the shadow of the porch with its sloping roof, and the whisperings of the sere cornstalks, mingled with the withered, bronzed foliage of the oaks, beat in mournful tones against his voice. "There is the finest corn-growing land in the world. You can plant corn in April, May, June, July. You can plant a crop of potatoes, market them, and put your corn in on the same land. Corn is worth sixty cents a bushel now; it rarely ever falls below fifty; it is easy to grow; it is the farmer's friend. It whispers of plenty," as he warmed to his subject, "the rustling of the green blades is the sweetest music to the farmer's ear! Do you know what we are doing down here? we are shipping it to Egypt."

The eager words tripped over one another, he was wide awake and splendidly enthusiastic, and he spoke the truth; if he had doubted one word he would have not uttered it. "Yes, sir; a steamer sailed from Norfolk with 120,000 bushels of Virginian corn for Alexandria, think of that!

"And as for vegetables and small fruits, why this soil is pure vegetable mould; it will grow anything. A man can live like a king here, everything in the world he needs his land can give him, — fruit and vegetables, corn and wheat, sheep and cattle. Look at those meadows! Game? Where, sir, is there a finer game preserve in the world?" pointing to the heavy lines of the swamp's growth. "Transportation? The canal is at your doors and the railroad is not two miles away. It is ideal! it is a place where a man can begin life, and with this rich land and genial climate, be sure of success.

"But corn is your best crop, it is the one you know best, also. Do you know what you can make here? eighty bushels of shelled corn to the acre, if you try, if you half try, and the bears don't dine too often on your roasting-

ears; and you know what I am selling it to you for — ten dollars an acre.

"Ten dollars an acre, and in twenty-five years, in ten, it will be worth a hundred. Where will you find farming land like this in thirty minutes' ride from a big city and in touch with the whole wide world? It is but a two hours' drive with your own team!"

Blakey paused, a long breath and a shake of his broad shoulders spoke of his impatience; for though the siren song was in the stranger's ears and in his heart, his eyes told him another tale. He was veering around to the young man's view point, but still his mind turned to the flare of this doubt and that. Blakey saw it with a sinking heart.

"Tell you what," he said finally; "you want to see a farm like this where some one is living on it; you want to know, actually know, what can be done, and not to hear about it. I see. That's the right way, sir. It's a big thing to make a move like this, and a man wants to be sure what he is doing. Now I can take you to such a place right away, it's just four or five miles further on; it's a western man who has settled there, too, come to think of it."

He had thought of it all along, and held it for his last card, though he had hoped devoutly and impatiently he would not have to play it. Now he saw that he must.

"He can tell you everything you want to know," he declared; which the farmer did, but took until the next day for the telling.

But Blakey's heart and soul were once more in the enterprise before that time; his fluent words were ready to supplement every statement made by the settler. He drove back to town jubilant. The day was raw and cold, and there was a sting of rain borne on the air currents; but the stranger saw no desolate acres nor dreary homes nor gray horizon; all the wayside was as Blakey prophesied it would be in the future. The present was the raw beginning. The western man, used to raw beginnings, did not pause to think that so this land had looked for wellnigh two hundred years.

Or, had they looked deeper, they might have seen that so it had looked, raw and ragged, because it had not come into the secret of its usefulness; it awaited the future whose dawn was in such prophecies as the young man

glibly made, repeating a shibboleth he had so often heard that he was steeped in it, though its significance had not yet struck home even to his pliant mind.

When the deed was drawn, the contract signed, the congratulatory dinner eaten under the tall, green, papier-mâché palms of the café, and the good-bys said, Blakey looked at his watch.

The steamer was gone hours ago on her daily trip up the Mobjack, his invitation to the house party had been declined, there might be another man in his place; he would risk it all. Sunday was yet to come, and he would have that day there, at least; with the unreasonableness of a strongly impulsive nature he vowed it, simply because it was his whim.

But he thought himself a fool twice before he accomplished it; once when he stood on the wharf at Old Point, the wind rising higher and higher, rain and snow stinging with slanting lines into the gray water, the comfort of a big hotel behind him, and he with no mind for it. A tug lay at the wharf, and fishing-boats and canoes. He would hire one of them, he would charter the tug. He was suddenly

rich with the successful conclusion of his enterprise; and in spite of the wet against his face, he laughed at the thought of it. But he was put to no such extravagant spending of his commission. The tug was bound up the Mobjack and needed no chartering, she was even going up the North River for a load of fish, and the captain was hospitably glad of a passenger.

He found the young man the blithest of companions; when the tug ploughed on, shaking and plunging from rough wind and rough water, her nose buried in a huge wave, water running under the rail, the spray dashing over the deck, Blakey shook the wet from his soft hat and his storm coat with an indifference the captain did not excel. When they were well in the Mobjack and the sheen of storm-swept water and the white race of the crests were everywhere, the waves pushing impertinent fingers into every corner of the land, running wellnigh to the doors of the fishermen's houses or curving around an island which was a peninsula at low tide, or racing over a strip of sand where the seagulls were wont to gather, Blakey had so much to say of houses and cot-

tages and the orchards faintly tinged with half-opened blossoms framing them, of the bobbing corks of the fishermen's seines and the wealth they might hold, of the screaming wild ducks flying across the rough water, or swimming the waves, their black heads like inky spots against the white crests, that the captain in his mind voted him the best of passengers and would have no fare.

"Wish I could take you all the way," he said regretfully, as they neared the wharf; "but you will find some fisherman's boat here, I am sure. They know I am coming in to buy up herring and shad and will be on the lookout. There 's Hudgins now, just wait until he has gotten his fish aboard and he will take you over. He lives near the judge."

But it was in Hudgins' boat that Blakey called himself, for the second time, a fool. Night was closing quickly over land and water and the storm rose with it. The wind was against them and the sail of the canoe jerked spitefully as the man brought her about now on this tack and now on that. She was slimy from her load of fish, and Blakey felt himself befouled with scales.

He blessed the darkness which hid him when he at last landed and went up across the wet grass towards the gleaming lights of the old brick house, looming huge and dusky amidst the storm-lashed mulberries and maples and poplars on the lawn.

Wet, chilled, half angry with himself as he was, there was something in his mind, creeping to his brain, transmitting itself to half-formulated thought, which drove out self-reflection. It was the question which had led him on, brought him to this moment, — What part in this gay company played Page Nottoway? Into what niche had she fitted, or had there been room left her? Had she searched the steamer yesterday with eyes which looked calm and unquestioning and yet, he would warrant, saw everything? What had she thought when at the river wharf she was the only passenger to land? What had she thought when Mrs. Warner told her who should have accompanied her? for of course she had told.

He stepped lightly upon the porch with some idea of how he wished to disclose himself, in the realization of which fortune favored him. The door was ajar, and the single lamp hang-

ing from the ceiling threw a circle of light on the polished floor of a deserted hall and the wide low steps of an empty stairway.

Page should have been descending the stairs. It was only fitting that after his dreamings, held in check, yet forming faint pictures from which his own eyes were averted, she should be coming down to the gay crowd he heard across the hall, the last of all, distraught, a trifle out of fitting, as he had persisted in depicting her.

He heard a step in the hall, drew back, slipped out of his storm coat and flung it over the porch rail; but it was only a maid, whom he called softly and sent with cautionings to his hostess.

When she came he laughed at her surprise as gleefully as a boy, but gently, he wanted no one besides to know as yet of his arrival; and he made his excuses and pleaded his anxiety to come at last, with a pressure of Mrs. Warner's soft hand and a warmth of glance and tone which were flattering but sincere.

"Glad to see you? of course I am! Have I asked any one to fill your place? Who could?" Her own laugh was deliciously lighthearted.

"I might have asked some one to make up the number, you know, but not to take *your* place. Come in; let me call the judge."

"No, no; which room was to be — is mine?"

She told him hurriedly.

"You won't tell," he begged, "until I come down."

"If you wish it, but you always were a bad boy. What scheme have you got on hand now? Whom are you going to surprise?" she asked, while the lamplight shone on her rounded figure, her clear eyes, and the gray hair piled high on her head, and gleamed on the silky folds of her gown. "Hurry," she cautioned as she turned away. "Supper is nearly ready." But she came back to whisper, "I hope you will look after Page Nottoway, do you know her?"

So no secrets had been told. That was all he thought of as he ran up the stairs, until he heard a step in the hall above.

Again his dream picture flitted before his face. He would meet her there; he knew she was this late comer from her room; he knew she was half careless of the gay crowd below. Had he not read the language of her calm self-

poise and her serene eyes? There was the swish of a silken skirt against the floor; he hurried. He would tell her now how sorry he was, make a jest of his trials in reaching her, exaggerate the difficulties; his eyes were shining as he finished the steps and looked eagerly along the wide hall.

At the end of it, looking through the window out into the storm-swept night, was a slender figure gowned in white. He put down his suit case and walked quickly towards her; but Page was not so tall, that gleaming mass of golden hair — He stood still as the girl turned. It was Mrs. Warner's most beautiful niece. A look of boredom showed on her exquisite face, but she was plainly glad to see Hugh Blakey.

"We had given you up," she cried. "Auntie told us you could not come; how did you get here?"

She listened to his brief explanation.

"You must have wanted to come," a gleam of coquetry in her dark eyes; "in such weather, too. How it storms!" as the rain dashed against the panes behind her.

"You are a brave young man and deserve" — her demure eyes dared any ending.

"I might have asked some one to make up the number, you know, but not to take *your* place. Come in; let me call the judge."

"No, no; which room was to be — is mine?"

She told him hurriedly.

"You won't tell," he begged, "until I come down."

"If you wish it, but you always were a bad boy. What scheme have you got on hand now? Whom are you going to surprise?" she asked, while the lamplight shone on her rounded figure, her clear eyes, and the gray hair piled high on her head, and gleamed on the silky folds of her gown. "Hurry," she cautioned as she turned away. "Supper is nearly ready." But she came back to whisper, "I hope you will look after Page Nottoway, do you know her?"

So no secrets had been told. That was all he thought of as he ran up the stairs, until he heard a step in the hall above.

Again his dream picture flitted before his face. He would meet her there; he knew she was this late comer from her room; he knew she was half careless of the gay crowd below. Had he not read the language of her calm self-

VII

BLAKEY was hot with indignation as he hastened his toilet. He fancied the secret plannings which had disposed of Page Nottoway as row or drive were talked of in which no third person was desirable, he fancied Page herself, bewildered, out of her bearings, scarcely knowing there was a difficulty in the situation and yet feeling it vaguely. It should be different now, he vowed; and he framed the gracious words he would say, the comforting thoughtfulness with which as her especially invited cavalier he would envelop her.

He went down the stairway picturing how he first should see her — alone in the gay crowd, with the loneliness which comes of aloofness, silent in the chatter of voices; but he noticed that a hush had fallen on the babble, his ear caught laughs, exclamations low and smothered, and faint strains of a mandolin.

Unheard he crossed the hall; unnoticed he stood in the doorway. There was a cluster of

black coats and a shimmer of light gowns near the centre of the room — the niece he had greeted upstairs, a young judge from Blakey's home county by her side, the other niece, some young women and men from the neighborhood. By the mantelpiece stood Judge Warner, his face red with laughter as he watched absorbedly some one in the clear space between him and his guests. Blakey, coming nearer and looking over the shoulder of one of the men, saw there before them a slender figure, white gowned, swaying to and fro in time to the quaint air her fingers picked on a mandolin swung by a ribbon about her neck. Her eyes gleamed dangerously dark with a sparkle of laughter glinting up from their depths. Slowly she moved with the rhythm of the music to this side and that — backwards, forwards, sideways, — the lissome body bent, gracious, studied, lower and lower, until she lay along the floor, her white hands outstretched above her head, a final bow of ceremony.

The judge leaned over to lift her. Unaided she sprang to her feet, sank into the nearest chair, and looking up radiant with applause, Page met Blakey's astonished gaze.

A startled look swept the laughter from her face, but no one heeded. It was he who was the centre as soon as they saw him, and it was in his eyes she read the amazement which sent a reflex wave over her own being and set her a-tingle from head to foot. How had she dared it? How had she dared the other things which she had done? How had she laughed and jested, introduced this game and that, set them puzzling over its mysteries, organized them, kept them together, herself the vivid centre? For Page, starving for gay companionship, had treated them much as they were students bent on enjoyment. They had found pleasure, it is true; but it was of a kind unlooked for and by some unwished for. There was a flash of satisfaction in the niece's dark eyes when Blakey bowed before the slender young woman in the chair who was looking up at him with so startled a gaze.

"Let me congratulate you; it was beautifully done!"

The words were well enough chosen, but there was a ring of irony in the tone to which a low "Thank you!" was the only answer.

"I did n't know you played or danced," he went on, still standing near her, his figure shutting out all others.

"I do not know that I have had the opportunity to tell you."

Page had been drinking of admiration, not criticism, and the tinge of the last in Blakey's tone was unwarrantable.

"I had an idea you were fond of outdoor sports."

"I don't think one precludes the other."

It was the first trace of didacticism he had seen in her. He changed the subject. "I hope you have enjoyed your visit;" and then he added hurriedly, "do you know I rather wondered about it?" He paused, afraid to finish and wishing devoutly he had not begun upon so perilous a subject.

"Wondered about what?"

For an instant he looked down at her searchingly, noting the wilful curve of the mouth, the tilt of the head, and the smooth cheek from which the flush of exertion was slowly fading.

"I — I —" he stammered, when Mrs. Warner put an end to his embarrassed uncertainty.

"You are to take Miss Nottoway into

supper," she announced in an undertone as she paused for a second near him; and quickly as she had spoken, a turn of Page's head, a flash of her eyes to a man near her, told him other things had been planned.

But Mrs. Warner disposed of him as easily as she had done of the young woman. At last she could manage her guests as she had at first intended, the gay train which swept through the hall was proof of it.

"I had no idea you were coming," said Page lamely to the young man who walked by her side with an air of stiff unapproachableness.

"Did n't Mrs. Warner tell you?"

"Tell me what?"

"Why that I—I—" It had been easy enough to formulate the situation in his own mind, but to translate it into words for this hearer would be brutally frank. He took refuge in commonplaces. "I hoped to be with you the first day, but was detained," he said simply.

"Oh!" there was a flash of comprehension in the face by his side and of something else he could not allow to linger there; distinctly resentful as he had been for a moment or two he must make his peace. It was a sore thrust

to his egotism to have shrined in his fancy a lonely woman awaiting his advent and to have found a brilliant one forgetful of his existence. But the very difference had added piquancy to a situation which a trace of anger would mar irretrievably; and he began with eager pleas and excuses, and followed these with such witty talk of things about them that Miss Nottoway's good humor was quite restored.

It was when they were going back from the dining-room across the hall that he asked again, "You dance?"

"Of course," a little impatiently.

"Will you give me the first waltz?"

"The first," hesitatingly. "I believe — yes — the first is already promised."

"The last then?"

"Oh! certainly."

Blakey was satisfied. He knew the meaning of the last and its possibilities.

"You are not going up now?" he pleaded when it was over and Mrs. Warner's supple fingers came crashing down on the keys and Page, breathless from a last mad whirl, leaned against her shoulder; when good-nights were being said, and the judge was yawning sleepily.

"She need not, need she?" begged the young man.

Mrs. Warner's hand crept up and closed about Page's slender fingers where they rested on her arm. "No," she said slowly; but her eyes, imperative, questioning, were looking over the girl's head at Blakey. She had seen with amusement many a flirtation in her big old house, seen many a one with him for actor; but her knowledge of men and women gained from the many guests of her home and from the many people she had known elsewhere told her that the language which the young people around her knew too well was to Page an unknown tongue.

There was a second's tense silence between them of which the girl against her shoulder knew nothing, then Blakey's proud eyes grew serious. "Not guilty, your honor," he said softly.

"Oh! well, surely, you need not hurry," bustled Mrs. Warner. "The judge and I are old fogies and the rest are tired out, I suppose; but Marian is not going yet; she told me so."

"Come into the library," urged Blakey, "the fire is glorious, I looked in as we were dancing

1482178

through the hall." He hurried Page away before she had time to think what he was doing. "Here!" as he pushed up a chair for her.

Page settled into it with a long breath of comfort. "It is delightful," she declared, "and you—" Her laughing eyes measured him as he leaned against the mantelpiece. She had intended only some careless word as to how content he seemed there; but instead she read swiftly the face with its look of dormant power under its restless dissatisfaction, noted the thick brown hair, the dark eyes, the heavy mustache and firmly moulded chin and broad shoulders.

It was the first thought of his individuality, the first question as to his force, which she had given him.

And Blakey saw and understood; saw the look away and the thoughtful face; his pulses beat quickly, but he would say nothing to help her over the awkward silence.

"You look too big there," she complained at last. "You fill the foreground too completely."

"I am willing," he answered lazily.

"But I am not," she cried half petulantly. "If I am to talk to you, you are to make yourself agreeable."

"Now who that was ever told to make himself agreeable succeeded in doing so?"

Page laughed. "Then make yourself comfortable."

"I am."

"Have your way," she retorted lightly.

"I usually do."

"How happy you must be!"

"Yes!" There was something in the tone of that "yes" which brought Page's long lashes fluttering up and then sent them down again, curling against a flushed cheek.

"Have the others gone upstairs?" she asked uneasily.

Blakey moved so that he could see through the open doorway across the hall. There was a flash in his eyes as he moved back again, but he only said, "Miss Marian and the judge are in the other room."

Marian had no idea of any lingerers except themselves. Her aunt had whispered something of Miss Nottoway as she stopped for a last word, but Marian had taken no heed to it. Her mind was a triumphant whirl.

She had known the young judge — young by comparison with her uncle — all of her life. He

had awakened to her personality six months ago. It had been a slow awakening on his part, slow and reluctant. He had found the dissipation by his heredity so strong a foe to conquer that he had long ago vowed himself to fight it unaided. He dared love no woman because the fate he might ask her to share was too uncertain. The strife for political preferment was keen enough to furnish all stimulus of excitement there was need for — woman might go her way.

But Marian would not go hers. There were a hundred wiles that she knew and used as carelessly as a rose might flaunt itself; she made a show of thoughtfulness and of remembrance of those about her which bore the semblance of unselfishness, practised a studied deference which wore the guise of humility; and her beauty, which the beholder never forgot, she seemed never to remember.

In delicate ways unnamable — so slight was the gossamer from which they were spun — she had compassed this big man, with his slouching shoulders and penthouse brows and incisive intellect, until all his soul was mad with a longing his great strength could not control.

The woman with her youth, her flower face, and baby eyes knew it better than he. For this one hour of the storm-swept night she paused to play with his passion.

For Blakey the careless pleasure of the moment was gone. He had seen the face of the man in the other room as he moved. He knew him quick of decision, sarcastic of speech, keen of judgment, a power lawyer and jury alike feared; to have beheld him with that look of pleading on his face, to know as he did the woman to whom the pleading was addressed — However blithe his mood had been, whatever nonsense he had meant to say, it all slipped from him. He was lost in the thought of the reality he had seen.

He stood looking moodily into the fire while all the voices of the night, now that laughter and music were hushed, howled about the house.

Page got to her feet. "I must say good-night," she said, regretful of the fireside and the cosy half hour.

Blakey started. Was the door still open across the hall? What vision was there behind the half-drawn portière?

Page's slippered feet were noiseless like his own as he followed her across the heavy carpet. At the door she paused to look back at him, to hold out her hand; but his startled gaze was over her head; she turned suddenly. Between the folds of the portière, as in a picture, Marian was framed.

A pedestal stood there, from which the heavy fern had been removed when the dancing began. The flowers waved in a corner of the room, but on the pedestal — they saw him as he lifted her in his arms and placed her there and knelt at her feet, her hands in his upstretched, her eyes laughing into his.

Page fell back against Blakey, then whirled to face him.

"Can he ever breathe into her a soul?" she whispered fiercely.

"Not if his own were the price!"

But it was not until afterwards that he wondered as to her insight and she to his knowledge.

VIII

WHEN Hugh Blakey had bidden Miss Nottoway good-by upon the wharf at West Norfolk, and crossed the harbor again to land at the lonely pier at the foot of his street, his humor would have been in accord with the cloudless sky and white-capped waves and fresh cool wind of the hour but for that memory of a friend whom he honored and for whom he feared. The hours between that swift vision and this moment had left him no time for theories. Now he stood idly on the pier and watched the ferryboat steaming away Norfolkwards, the shine of sails gleaming in the western light, the clustering hulls about the point, and at his feet the in-rushing tide dashing high against the piles.

He remembered the young judge's face as he had seen it the day before, the glow of happiness in his eyes, the smoothing out of the lines of bitterness and sorrow in his face; for

there is no fountain of youth except happiness. Its touch alone revivifies the soul and shines through the sheathing until that outward form which meets the eye of man wears the transformation of its witchery.

And this man standing here knew that the other had denied his thirst through more than half of the years of a man's life, only to stoop at last to drink from a shallow spring whose source was vanity.

He came along the pier, his head bent in thought of it. It was early enough for an hour's idleness, yet too late to go into the city; besides he was not in the humor. He stopped at his boarding house, read the few letters he found there, came out again into the sunlight, and wondered what he should do with himself. A glimpse of a white frock at a cottage gate decided him. He went striding up the broad walk, but Nellie had either eluded or had not noticed him. She was busy. A mound of scratched-up brown earth in a corner of the narrow front yard was being faithfully worked over with a spoon.

"Nellie!" Blakey called reproachfully at the gate.

The child pushed back her hat and turned a look of delight on his face, but she stood still. Her work was too absorbing to leave.

"You bad girl!" he scolded as he came to her and picked her up, spoon and all, in his arms.

"What are you doing?" he demanded.

"Working."

Blakey eyed her quizzically, the grime of her hands, the earth stains on her frock, and her serious eyes.

"What are you planting?" he asked confidentially, "is it sweet peas?" She shook her head.

"Marigolds?" he ventured.

"Mexican roses?" he guessed along the line of her favorites, but still he was wrong.

"A brand new flower, let me see the seeds?"

There was a pocket in her gown and she ran her hand into it and brought it out, her fist doubled firmly; slowly she opened her fingers and held out the seed on her pink palm. It was yellow corn.

Blakey gave a gasp of astonishment.

"I got it from the chicken coop," she confided.

"But you must n't plant this in the front

yard," he cautioned; "if you really want to see it grow you must put it somewhere else."

"No," said the child positively. "I am going to plant it here; then we can have some corn."

"What for?" The child saw the amusement in his eyes, but her own were grave enough.

"To eat," she answered soberly.

"Why, mamma will buy all you want." He delighted to talk to her and watch the turns of her childish thought; he was as attentive in his speech as if she were a grown-up, and that alone went far towards keeping him on his throne in her staunch heart.

"I don't know," she said eagerly. "Papa says we must be careful." She stopped with a vague idea that perhaps she had better not repeat just what papa had said.

"I am afraid we will need it," she concluded, with such a world of sorrowful wisdom in her tone that Blakey after one searching look at her face put her on her feet.

"Well, you have n't dug deep enough," he said cheerily, "lend me your spoon; dear me, what can you do with this?" but he stooped over and turned the earth, broke the clods and

pounded them into a plant bed, Nellie at his side watching him absorbedly. "There now, we must make some holes like this and put two or three grains of corn in each," — he left that for the child's hands, — "and cover them up, and by and by a tiny green feather will come poking up, and there is your corn starting out to see what it looks like around here! And mind you, don't trouble it! Where's mamma, Nellie?" he added suddenly.

"In the house," said the child carelessly. She had found too much to delight her here to think of anything else just yet.

Blakey was sufficiently at home to walk in through the open door. In the dining-room was a clatter of china.

"No cook yet," he called gayly. "I'll have to make that noration."

"I don't know that I want you to," said Betty Carroll after she had greeted him.

"Succeeded so well yourself?" He was watching her keenly, though he spoke carelessly. There was a shadow over her face of which he had seen the faint beginnings, now it showed plainly around the sad mouth and in the dulled eyes.

"No; I am sick and tired of the whole thing," as if she had found at last one subject on which to vent whatever it was she felt of sorrow or irritation; "forever teaching, forever watching, forever considering some dull greenhorn who is ignorant enough and pretends still further stupidity to escape the responsibility of her duties; whose only idea is to shirk all she can, and get all the money possible out of me, and then rush off to spend it in finery. Clothes," scornfully, "every cook I have had since I have been here has spent twice as much on her wardrobe as I have."

She laughed, a touch of bravado in her voice, and went on with her monologue as if she were fighting off the scrutiny of Blakey's eyes or any question he might ask.

"When I first came here to live it seemed to me that the one thing which had settled itself on ideal lines was the domestic problem. Not that I knew much of it — heaven only knows how ignorant I was; but I had heard it discussed and read — oh yes, I read it up when I was studying my cook books."

She broke off; the memory of that secret, stolen study of household affairs swept over

her and jarred upon the despairing mood against which she had fought all day.

"Cheap rents, good houses for servants, hours of service which did not claim them too long — that was the ideal I had heard held up; and I found it here. And what is the result? The most irresponsible and unreliable class I have ever seen. A man picks up a day's work on the wharves, a woman takes in the laundry from one family, and that week is provided for; the rest of the time is devoted to the luxury of idleness.

"Did you ever consider the labor conditions here?" She talked with forceful animation, but there came before Blakey's eyes a thing he had often seen and knew the meaning of, — a bird trailing her wings across the dew-wet grass and coaxing further and further afield from the secret of her treasure; what brought the picture before him? Was it the bright anxiety of the woman's eyes?

"In every line of labor here there is a call for workers; that is, unskilled labor which an ignorant class is capable of doing, — the landing of freight at the wharves, the laying of brick and mortar; the rapid development of this

country is a fascination to me. You would think the laborers would lay up money, buy the cheap houses on every hand; what do you see? Look at the fringe of hovels on the outskirts everywhere; the smallpox placard has not disappeared in five years from one or another doorway among them."

Blakey made some careless assent and listened, a sickening uncertainty besetting him. What had Nellie meant? What had wrought this tactful woman to the pitch of such trenchant criticism?

"Did you hear about Rachel?" she asked. Rachel was the last cook.

"She is married. Yes, that was the reason of her disappearance. She is married to a soldier from the home at Hampton, a man sixty-five years old; and she is twenty. She had been having a dress made, you know, a blue silk." Mrs. Carroll's face brightened. She loved a good story and told one well. "She went about every day to try it on. I thought very little of it; it did not matter to me what she did when her work was finished; and one day she came back elated. The dressmaker's brother was there, she told me, and

he was a soldier. She talked a little of his uniform; but it was his pension which had made the impression — eight dollars a month she said it was; and when she went off the other day she married him. He has two weeks of his vacation left and then he must go back.

"She has reasoned it all out," she resumed after Blakey's laughter over the situation, "she understands it as clearly as you or I. When the old soldier dies his pension goes to his widow. She has an eye on her mourning already, I think; at least she told me about 'Sis Molly's being so becomin', wid a veil down to de hem o' de skirt.'"

"Perhaps she will come back to you when the old man goes home," Blakey suggested.

"I don't know that I want her. No, I am tired of the whole thing. I shall get some sort of a quick stove for cooking, something —" Her voice trailed off into silence, a broken sentence at variance with the usual manner of her animated speech.

"Tom will not allow it!" declared Blakey vehemently.

She looked up at him with a startled glance and her cheek paled.

"You have been into town?" she asked quickly.

"No, I came straight over from the steamer."

She caught her breath. "You had a pleasant visit?" It was evident that she had no desire to tell him anything of herself which he did not already know.

"Very. What's this about Tom? Tell me."

"You will hear soon enough."

"I want to know now."

"Have n't you seen the papers?"

"Have n't read one for four days."

"Well," with a quiver of her breath as if even the telling hurt her, "you knew a trust for his line of business was being formed?"

"I knew it was being talked of. I never thought it would amount to much."

"It has amounted to a good deal." There was a tremble of Betty Carroll's lip which told him it was all that she could say.

"It has been consummated?"

She nodded her head.

"They will need a manager here."

"Mr. Weston has been appointed." She named a rival in the business.

"I hope they paid Tom well for his stock?" he asked indignantly.

"Oh yes; but," with a pitiful attempt of fun-making, "I think Tom would have preferred not to sell. He had been very much encouraged lately," she went on, because it was a necessity to talk if she would hide her weakness. There was no one to whom she had dared allow herself to speak of it; there was nothing which could be said; it was the imperative finality of the affair that made it crushing, from the time when Tom had come in, white faced, and said simply, as he put his hat on the rack, "I am shut out, Betty."

She had had no idea of what he meant; she had no glimmer of foreknowledge to prepare her, only the conviction which had shadowed her face lately that her husband was worried.

He had told her. He would have kept the bitterness of the details to himself if he could, but with the liberty of the press has come also the pass that a man's affairs are the public's as well as his own, so long as the public is interested.

"I 'll be paid," he had concluded, "full value for every piece of stock I carry; but I 'll never

be paid for the years I spent building up the business, for the future I saw in it and worked for and had almost accomplished. I 'll never be paid for the hopes I put into it, the thought that year by year added to the value of it, that I was building up a business which would feed and clothe us and bring up our children and provide for our old age." He sat down heavily, leaned his hands upon his knees, and bent forward. "I thought that each day's work was my lifework," — he spoke as if thinking aloud; it was the crystallized thought of hours of anxiety which amounted almost to agony, — "that I would have to knock at no other door; I had found my open one. Well," he pulled himself together, "I must begin again somehow, we have the money to begin with, Betty; we must not forget that. Ten years ago I had not much outside of my salary.

"But that is the only thing I know," he added, as his wife leaned against his chair and his child cuddled against him; and the pitying God in heaven knew that the man had not a fear in his heart save for them — for them.

"When I learned it as a boy I saw its possibilities; when I came down for the firm I

saw the chance there was here. I saved every dollar I could, borrowed some, and then started in for myself, you know, Betty," he turned and looked up at her, his face white and drawn, but striving to smile; and her arms crept from the chair around his neck as she leaned over him, behind, where he could not see her eyes.

Yes, she knew. They were engaged to be married then. As soon as his business could be established, as soon as there was a possibility of its paying for two, their home was to be set up. It had been, it was almost paid for, and it stood storm threatened.

She rested her cheek on his thick hair and her husband never felt the tear drops which sparkled there.

It was she who took up the commonplaces, who spread the supper daintily while the touch of his child's head against his breast comforted him in a way he did not know. He only felt that the ebb of his courage had been reached, and that the heave of the flood tide, more a promise than a motion, was in his pulses.

She had kept to the commonplaces since. She kept to them as she talked of her husband

and his work in as light phrases as she could frame.

"Tom is late," she added restlessly. "I thought he would have been here before now."

"Where has he gone?"

"Into Norfolk."

"What is he going to do?"

"I have n't an idea."

Blakey got up and walked to the window. He thought of all the many schemes he had proposed to other men for making money, and to him the bawbles glittered as well as to the men to whom he had shown them; there was not one he would offer his friend.

No one knew the uncertainties of speculation more than he. No one knew better that for even a possibility of success a man who has not capital to control a business must approach it untrammelled, stand buffets, discouragements, live on what he can get, and live how he can before the glint of success flickers on his horizon.

But he must not let her see a sign of his dismay. He must turn to glittering generalities.

"Well, in a country like this, you know, there is so much a man can take hold of;

if he does n't like one thing he can turn to another; if he 's tired of one business — " he made a gesture with his hands, spreading them wide apart, and his words tripped over one another in his eager utterance. " Tom 's all right; don't bother about him; just keep a stiff upper lip, you know, and don't let him see you are worried.

" Don't worry anyhow, why should you? Is Tom coming back to supper? I believe I 'll stay over and see him — stay to supper! Well you are sure it won't be any trouble? I just hate the idea of going up the street; I 'm spoiled — been having too good a time."

He sat down again and began to tell her every tale he could think of, every exaggerated fancy, until the color crept into her cheek and her laugh rang through the house and her husband opening the door heard it and thanked God. For the greatest agony a man can feel is to see the joy wiped from the face of one he loves more than his life, to know the laughter is hushed on her lips, and to know that a misfortune against which he is helpless has struck her through him; as it were, with his hands.

IX

PAGE NOTTOWAY had been too many years away to know that there was a depression in the home atmosphere. Her father was a man not given to much talking, a man of quick decisions in his business matters, and usually successful ones, of clear observation, and a faculty for keeping the results of it to himself. With a figure straight and slender as that of youth, and an eye as keen, his thick hair was as white as that of old age and his mustache was bleached to the same silvery hue.

He had never been able to take his daughter seriously. Her books, her college life, her ambitions, had all seemed more or less a joke to him, it was so unnecessary to his scheme of life; but what Page wanted she must have, no matter what the cost of sacrifice.

And Page had been too long away to think there was anything unusual in her father's absorption in the quotations of the produce market; she never knew how tense was his

listening at the telephone for the answers to his questions in the city; she never knew the restless observations of early morning and late night, of cloud and wind and rain and sun and heat and chill; nor did she know that his heaviest shipment that spring had struck a falling market.

Her mother's watchfulness of him, her anxiety to keep an atmosphere of cheerfulness about the household, were but a natural part of her life in Page's eyes.

How could there be anything but cheer in a world where the grass was green and the waters blue, the lawn a tangle of bloom and the beach a loitering place for daydreams; where the apple trees behind the old house were pink clouds of fragrance, and the wild-plum bushes on the creek border were white clusters of incense where the creek went murmuring through tender green rushes, the bees hummed about the blossoms, and the birds sang in the treetops?

If only there were something else besides idle enjoyment! Page looked on it as a background woven of gorgeous colorings and rich fabrics, and felt in her ardent and restless soul that the play was long beginning.

It was in such a mood of restlessness that a plan cherished and forgotten came back to her. She was lounging on the beach, the warm sands at her feet and the vivifying sun flooding her, when she remembered it; and she sprang to her feet and went singing along the way where she knew her father could be found.

He was coming in from the fields when she met him and tucked her hand under his arm and loitered with him along the sunny road that lay like a dusty ribbon across the land, green and brown. The asparagus thrust pale tips into the soft air and the strawberries were abloom, the drift of their white blossoms, close-set, showing down the long rows as the wind tossed the green leaves to and fro.

"Well, well!" Mr. Nottoway paused for searching observations of bloom and leaf and plant, "this promises all right. I never had quite so large an acreage in strawberries, and I don't like to venture so much on one crop, but last year they paid better than anything else." An impatient sigh bespoke his anxiety as they turned away.

The gleam of the road under the noon sun struck full in their faces, and Mr. Nottoway

pulled his soft hat lower over his eyes, thrust his hands in his pockets, and walked with bent head in the sunlight. Page fitted her light step to his stride.

"Father," she said carelessly, as if the request she was going to make were as much a thing of course as the rain and the wind and the fresh earth, "do you know what I want?"

"The Lord only knows!" he answered whimsically.

"Guess!"

"You want to go to Norfolk this afternoon?"

"No."

"You want to go and see Mrs. Carroll?"

"No," impatiently, "nothing like that. This is something really important."

"You want to go back to college for the commencement?"

He had feared it all along and he might as well name his fear, for the thing was impossible, and his first denial of her pleasure was yet to be spoken.

"No," she answered slowly, "I had not thought of that."

"Then don't, because you can't — because we can't spare you," he corrected himself.

And Page, the new thought in her mind, was silent.

"Did n't you ever think how much your mother and I missed you all the time you were away?" he asked presently.

"You and mother miss me!" in loving scorn, "would you ever miss anybody? that is, of course, so long as you knew I was well," she hastened, hiding the blunder her father's eyes told her she had made.

"Page," he cried, as if unwittingly she had hurt him.

"As if you did n't know it," she pretended to tease and carry off the matter lightly, "and I, too, long ago."

Yet the speech made her father wince and send a swift retrospective glance backwards over the remembered records of his daughter's treatment; but that swift glance comforted. If ever a girl had been spoiled, he told himself, it was that slip of a one by his side; he had given her everything he could think of that she wanted, and what more could a man do? He reassured himself. "Well," he went back to the

topic, "you have n't told me what it was you wanted."

Page began skilfully at the edges of her request.

"Father," she commenced, "did you ever see anybody play golf?"

"No!" and his tone indicated he would not care if he never did.

"You have read of it?"

"I have seen the word, if that's what you mean."

"Well," with a long breath and a wheedling glance, "I am very fond of it."

"You are!" with a swift look of amusement at the lithe figure by his side.

"Yes; you know I love an out-of-door life." She spoke a trifle sentimentally.

"Well, I was about to say that you were born out of doors," chuckled the man; "but it was not quite that bad."

"I don't mean only to stay out of doors, to loiter around, but sport."

"What's that?" Sport was a word which usually associated itself in Mr. Nottoway's mind with horse racing and gambling.

"Tennis and golf and—"

"Basket ball, I suppose."

Page laughed merrily. "Yes, basket ball. Do you know," she went on enthusiastically, "that I was one of the best all-round athletes at school. I am little, I know," with a stiffening of all her inches, "but I am tough."

"Good Lord!" her father groaned, for tough went in a category with those other words.

"Oh—ah, strong, I mean." Page threw back her head and her laugh was as clear as the robin's song where he chirped overhead.

"You see I have lived out of doors all my life, as you said, and my muscles—um!"

"I have no doubt whatever of the state of your muscles," he assured her as he looked down on her.

"But I am positively afraid that I shall get soft!" she exclaimed dramatically.

Her father's lips dropped apart, soft on whom? and what an expression! There was only one young man who had called more than once or twice, and that was Hugh Blakey. He was a good enough fellow, but she had seen him so seldom, and to tell him, her father! Surely she should have told her mother! and in such a fashion! Was this the effect of col-

lege training? he had had his doubts all the while.

"I really think I ought to have something to harden me up." Her father had a dismayed thought that that had been done already. "Some good, bracing, out-of-door practice."

"Yes," weakly; he was altogether at sea now.

"If Jesse is not busy this afternoon," with a fine display of carelessness now that the point was reached, "I should like to have him to begin to lay off a golf course."

"A what?"

She repeated.

"How do you do it?"

"Why, I would show him of course."

They were near the stables now, and she brought him around behind them and back of the house to the bit of waste land by the creek, the only waste land on the farm; the thicket of wild plums and bramble and sedge was good to look upon with its blossoms of white and its pale green stems studded with glossy leaves and the whispering brown sedge.

"We could start here and play across the ravine," — a narrow slip which was sometimes

covered with the tide, — "and — you would not mind my taking a small part of the potato field?"

She stopped, dismayed at her own thought thus put into words. Her father brought her up roundly with a short question. "How much land would it take?"

"We could do with two or three acres."

The echo of his laugh was flung back by house and barn; he caught the hand that was slipping from his arm. Page, hurt to the core, was turning to leave him.

"Page," he asked, his hand still holding hers, "do you know what three acres of trucking land mean? Well, if you had its value, it would go pretty far towards buying your dresses for a year! Do you know what each acre must bring me if I want to keep things up to the mark? Just two hundred dollars! It will cost me eighty dollars in fertilizers and labor to do it, but then — Well you see I can't spare you three hundred and sixty a year for sport, I might not be able to do some other things for you."

"But part of this is good for nothing," insisted Page hotly.

"And there comes Jesse now, and there are the pipes," he pointed to a heap of terra-cotta drainage pipes she had not noticed, "he begins work here to-day to level this bluff and fill in this ravine."

The farmer who had no sons spoke with the explicitness he often used to his womankind. "I will plant corn here later on and get the soil in good condition. This fall I am going to set out an asparagus bed; so near the water, and with an exposure almost southerly, it ought to do well—better than any other place on the farm."

He went on talking of the project and of others as they walked by the lilac bushes before the old house, and around the porch under the blossoming apple trees; but at the porch steps he called, "Page!" when he was halfway up. It was so hard not to give his only daughter, his only child, whatever she wished.

"Page," he asked, "how about tennis? could not you find a spot big enough on the lawn?"

But he laughed as she wheeled on the top step and flung her hands wide apart. His look followed hers over spiræa and bridal wreath and jessamine, calicanthus, and lilac, and syringa; over roses rare and roses old; over

stiff flower beds and riot of growth and crowded trees where the flowers were not; and he laughed softly.

Page had her toys; these were his wife's. He had indulged her as freely as he had done his daughter.

"I don't know what we will do."

"I 'll tell you," Page brought her hands together and looked down at him pleadingly, "I shall have to have a horse."

"What for?"

"To ride and drive, of course."

"It 's not safe."

"You know I can ride!" indignantly, "and drive also."

"I am not afraid of that," her father said shortly.

"Of what then?"

"The negroes," he blurted as he strode up the steps past her. But at the door he paused, came back. "Page," he asked hesitatingly, "would n't you like to have a new dress?"

"I have more now than there are places to wear them." She spoke lightly, hiding the disappointment she felt; but her father misunderstood.

So that was the way she felt, he thought, and home was not good enough for the pretty gowns he lavished on her. Troubles had been thickening about him for months; he was fighting them manfully; but this keen thrust was like a blade point which brought a drop of blood from the heart. He turned away so straight, so proud, that his daughter, wide eyed, held her breath as he went through the library door and closed it after him.

Page flung it open like a whirlwind, and swept the paper from his lap as she threw herself there. "You know I did n't mean it — that — the way it sounded; you know I did n't; how could you think such a thing?" She put her hands up to his face and petted him, smoothing his cheek as she had done when a child. "Look at me," she demanded as she sprang to her feet; "look at this waist," — it was of some soft white stuff exquisitely finished and fitted, — "this skirt," — the tailored cloth clung to her like a sheath, — "and these boots," — she thrust out a perfectly shod foot; "is n't this extravagance? You know it is extravagance for me to dress so every day, and I have n't a thing that is rough, you are such

a — you always would send me such fine clothes."

"It was your mother," said her father simply.

"Oh yes; and I can hear you now telling her, 'Don't you think it is time for Page to have some new clothes?'" mimicking him; "'and for mercy's sake get her some decent ones!' oh yes," she ran up to him and put her arms around his neck, "I know you through and through."

And she knew only his fatherhood. Though she teased him about his devotion to her mother, the depths of his passion for his wife she had never divined; his business life was a closed book; his relation with the outside world was not even a written word to her.

X

BUT it was a hard thing for Page, who had been trained to activity and to make full use of each moment, to find her only occupation in watching the slow march of the hours, gorgeous as might be the pageantry of the springtide. Her father, with the thought of the first indulgence which he had ever denied her rankling in his mind, watched her more keenly than she knew; and at last solved the difficulty which he saw and regretted. Young girls should grow as roses did, he thought; as beautifully and carelessly; but if his daughter was not content and wanted something more than a luxurious soil in which to blossom, something must be found; and he found it.

"Page," he said, as he stood in the hall door watching her coming down the stairs in the early morning, "I have gotten you a boat."

Page stopped where she stood on the last step and looked at him as she had done in

childhood when he had surprised her with a toy, — her eyes wide and dark and her red mouth rounded for the exclamation which was left unsaid.

"There it is at the wharf; the man brought it over this morning. The river is a playground neither your mother nor I will dispute with you," he added dryly, and laughed at her delight, though his eyes sparkled at sight of it.

"You had better not venture out until you can find some one to teach you a little about managing her," he cautioned. "I 'll go with you as soon as I can; or perhaps Blakey will teach you," he added as an afterthought.

Blakey was delighted, or rather he said that he was. In truth he was tired when, that afternoon, he drove over; and the shaded corner where Page was sitting, the shadows of the half-formed honeysuckle leaves flickering over her, seemed the most enviable nook his fancy could paint. To sit and watch her piquant face, to see the laughter glimmer in her eyes long before it rippled over her lips, to listen to the wind blowing in the treetops and swaying the rosebushes, and to the murmur of the river's flow were a guerdon that

repaid the rush he had made all day to find this idle hour at its close.

But Page was of no such opinion, she had hoped through the hours that he would come, infrequent as were his visits. When there was a sound of wheels down the road she had sprung to her feet and watched with delighted eyes as he drove to the stable gate, sprang out and gave his horse in charge to the man he saw there. That slender figure against the porch rail, with the bright welcome in her face, quickened the steps with which he came towards her.

He was flattered at her eagerness, and a flush crept up his cheek as she greeted him. "Oh, Mr. Blakey, I am glad you have come, it was a great temptation to telephone you."

He caught his breath and bit his lip, — his boyish habit of showing surprise and pleasure.

"Why did n't you?"

"Oh well, I would n't do that," she stammered; "but I did hope — I thought when you did come you would show me something about my boat."

"Oh yes," to his quick question; "don't you see her down there at the wharf? is n't she

a beauty? I am wild with impatience to try her!" She stood, the flush creeping up under the clear skin. "Father has n't time to go with me; won't you—don't you think you would like to?" she coaxed, with little idea of the warmth of her look and the pleading of the eyes.

Blakey felt as if dashed with ice; the enthusiasm was for the toy, not for him. "You can't go in that dress," he stammered.

Page looked with impatience at the silken skirt rippling about her feet. "Oh, that does n't matter," she gathered the sweep of it from the floor.

"The river will be lovely in the moonlight," Blakey naively suggested.

"But I can't see then," she pleaded, "are you tired?"

"Oh no; not at all. I was only thinking of the moonlight — if you would let me stay."

"You are expected," she assured him gravely. "Mother is in the kitchen now. I heard her start as soon as she saw you coming. She is planning with Molly what you would like best for supper, you will not disappoint her?"

"Not for worlds!" He got at last to his feet.

"Are you going to get a hat or anything?"

"Nothing. I want nothing but the oars, and they are in the boat."

And when they were out on the deep current of the river, the boat rocking softly, the winds blowing low, and Page with grave, intent eyes watching every stroke, Blakey wondered that he should have been reluctant. Perhaps he was aware that he was not altogether unpleasant to look upon as Page's eyes, of necessity, were on him; there was a look on his face which was not altogether displeasure when her straight glance wavered down to his hands and their firm grasp upon the handle of the oars and noted his easy stroke; but he was not prepared when, after such watching, she suddenly assured him that she could manage the oars now herself.

"I must," she insisted; "that is what I came for."

Blakey looked at her dubiously. "You will have to sit here by me then. Be careful," as she instantly moved. "Give me your hand!" He slipped an oar into the boat and held out his hand to assist her; the boat rocked with her uncertain steps as she slipped down on the seat beside him.

He leaned over her to place the oar in the rowlock, and showed her how to clasp her hands upon the handle and dip the blade, not deeply "but curved so," and he pulled at his oar to show; but the touch of her so near was intoxicating. He missed his stroke and lurched backwards. Her laughter was not reassuring, nor was the calm manner in which she set herself to copy his every motion; and she was an apt pupil, her training in other athletic fields stood her in good stead in this.

But when she demanded both oars Blakey protested; it was hard pulling against the tide, and it was dangerous for any but an adept on the deep, strong current flowing out from the Western-branch on which they floated. When she would have her way he slipped to his knees in the bottom of the boat, and facing her, put his hands on the oars above hers, so teaching her the rhythm of the stroke.

Mr. Nottoway on the lawn was dumbfounded at the dramatic pose until, looking longer, he understood; for Blakey had no idea of devotion, he was only thankful that the boat was staunch and the bottom dry.

"Now," he commanded, when he thought the

lesson well learned, "you must go back to the stern. Give me the oars, do you want to blister your hands?"

Page, trailing her hot palms in the water, wondered if that were not already done.

The refrain of a boat song came to Blakey with the rhythm of the rowlocks and the swish of the water under the boat's bow: —

> "The jolt of the rowlocks, the splash of the oar,
> The race of the drops 'long the blade —"

The last lines slipped his memory; and if he had remembered them he would not have repeated the verse. He had an egotistic horror of venturing on the wrong thing with this wide-awake young woman in the stern; as often as he had seen her their talk had been of the lightest themes and prompted by a sympathetic enjoyment of the surroundings and the hour. But Blakey was satisfied; he was doubly satisfied now as they rowed into the path of the sunset and the yellow light irradiated her face, bringing out each odd charm of her coloring, — the fair white skin, the dark limpid eyes, and the heavy masses of her hair.

He trailed the oars idly in the water, and

Page, watching the river's flow and listening to the lap of the waves and feeling the touch of the salt wind on her cheek, vowed she would live on the river.

She kept her word. She found a delight in it she had not dreamed of. She had thought that she knew the river — but she knew it from her door. She learned it had a hundred moods reserved for those who float upon its bosom: its changeful tints and cat's-paw winds and flaws and rufflings; its colorings which fade for the distant view to universal blue; the tang of the salt air in her nostrils as she pulled against the tide or yielded to the current's rush and floated idly. How the clouds shadowed it, and the sunlight glinted back from it, and the rain stung into it with a million spreading circles where the round drops splashed! how the fishhawk sought its prey and the gulls skimmed its white caps and rested on its hollows!

Soon strength and skill were sufficient for her to row under the shadowings of the bridge across the river's mouth and out to the pier, slowly awakening to its life of the long warm summer days.

Page knew the cause of Betty Carroll's troubled face, and she set all her winsome self to comfort her; but while sympathy is a potent factor in easing burdens, it never lifts the weight unless it be of that God-given kind which aids while it comforts; and Page would have found the task too hard for her unskilled hands had it not been that a hope of better things already brightened the cottage life.

In less than a month after that hard day when Tom Carroll had come home with the news which had beclouded it, he entered the house with a gay announcement.

"Betty!" he called; "Betty!" and the very tone of his voice had quickened her footsteps; "it's coming all right, I do believe. I think I see the way out, and it may be all for the best, in spite of the worry we have had."

He sat down to talk to her and explain that a company was being formed for developing a new resort at the seaside. Barnes was interested, and Whitman, and other men of the city whom he named, and a Denver man was backing the enterprise. He told her of the formation of the stock company, the face value of the shares, and their cost. A man would be

needed at the head of affairs who would stay there at the shore, and they wanted him to go. They would build him a house and pay him a good salary.

"Tom, you are not going to put your money in it?" his wife interrupted him to ask.

"Certainly." He spoke as if it were the only thing to do; he did not add that it was the only way to obtain the position.

"Have you done so?" she asked quickly.

"I have," he answered soberly; and after that there was nothing possible but hopeful talk of the future: neither dared look back.

His wife's heart ached with fear. She was worn with the atmosphere of speculation which had enveloped even her. She determined to ask Blakey about the company's affairs when she should see him; but he was busily occupied, and it was a week before she met him on the pier, where he had just landed from the ferry steamer.

Only a fisherman and Nellie were in sight, and Betty Carroll poured out her pent-up anxiety in one long quick-spoken sentence, while Blakey listened, his silence hiding his dismay.

"The scheme is a good one," he said slowly, feeling his way to the encouragement he was determined to express. "We are growing so fast," he went on with rapidly mounting enthusiasm, "and doing so many things, developing in so many directions down here, that nothing surprises me. Men are making money out of such things, and making lots of it. The city will run an electric line out there, I hear, and they are to build a big hotel and a row of cottages; it promises well. They bought the land cheap before any one else knew of their plans for it. Yes, it may be a good thing; of course it will be." He pulled himself up quickly to add the encouraging words.

"Are you interested?" Betty Carroll asked quietly.

"Yes."

"Have you invested any of your money?" she persisted.

"No."

"Why not?" she asked sharply.

"Because I had none to invest," he answered, reddening at the admission. He never hated his lack of money until he was compelled to acknowledge it; so long as it was a fact to

which he alone had to fit himself it did not matter, but when he had to reckon with it in relation to others he despised it.

"This may be the very thing for Tom," he hastened on, stammering in his eagerness, "you will have a cottage there, and the surf is fine; we will come down and see you any time, come so often that you will get tired of us."

The "us" and "we" were unnoticed by the young man, but not by his hearer, anxious as she was about her own affairs; she knew whom he meant. Blakey's manner to Miss Nottoway was unreadable; it had none of the ardor which marked his acquaintance with her winter's guest, and yet she distrusted the calm surface of it.

For Page it was what it appeared to be, she knew; but for Blakey it was too unusual to be accepted. She thought dully that she must warn Nellie for fear some careless speech of hers might raise an interfering ghost; the child was prone to tell whatever she knew at the time when one least wished to hear it, and the insistent quality of her voice, the careful choice of her words, the steadfast gaze of her eyes, which held the hearer's attention while she talked,

combined to make her well listened to when she chose to make her confidences.

She must talk to Nellie, the mother reflected to herself as the child ran up to them, and Nellie's first words sent the warning home. "Hugh," she asked as she slipped her hand into his, "have you got a letter from Belle?" It was no fault of hers that Nellie used the names of her friends as she did.

Blakey reddened. "No — no," he stammered.

"Why, it has been such a long time since you heard," she complained; and then her mother drew her away.

Blakey did not notice the manœuvre, for as he turned he saw a boat shooting out from the shadow of the bridge across the river's mouth; the slender figure of the rower swayed gracefully to the measured sweep of the light oars, and he stood still watching her, forgetful of all else.

But Nellie and her mother had gone on to a pavilion jutting from the side of the bridge and had seated themselves on a rough bench along its side; the child swung her feet idly as her mother wondered what she would say. "Nellie," she began, "you must not talk to Hugh about Belle."

"I only asked if he had a letter," the child said, her trembling lips scarce forming the words. Hugh had answered the question so queerly and now her mother was telling her she should not have asked it. "He used to talk about her lots," she blurted out in self-defence.

"Yes, but now—" What could she say? and she was so heartsick she scarcely heeded what she did say. "Don't talk about her before Page," she cautioned wearily and unwisely, as she leaned against the rail and watched the rise and fall of the never ceasing waves.

Nellie looked up with a swift intelligence on her face which would have been a warning had her mother seen it, but her thoughts were as far off as the waters ran and as troubled as their tossing. The waves lapped softly against the piles beneath them and against the waterstairs at the pavilion side, and there was no other sound until Blakey's footsteps rang along the weather-warped planking.

Nellie looked at him, comprehension on every dainty feature, until he winced at the keenness of it.

"Miss Nottoway is coming," he stammered, flushing with embarrassment.

Nellie slipped from the rough bench and went up close to him. "Oh!" she breathed softly, her eyes never changing their expression of sympathetic understanding. "She is coming to spend the night with mamma," she added confidentially.

"I am so glad! there she is now," she cried as the boat shot out on the other side.

The red was still on Blakey's face and he was sensitively awkward as he hurried down to the waterstairs to assist Miss Nottoway out of her boat, and to fasten it for her; and she was instantly conscious of the personality of it and unreasonably resentful.

"I have come to spend the night with Mrs. Carroll," she announced with a dignity which was in excess of the demand.

"So I heard," he blundered.

Her foot was on the slender step and the spray was dashing across her boot, but she stood still gazing at him. He knew that she was coming, she accused, and he was there to meet her; a wave of scornful self-questioning swept her from head to foot. She turned,

stung by the thoughts it brought, and ran up the stairs, stumbling over her skirt. He caught her, but she scarcely noticed him.

"I have come as you *asked* me," she exclaimed breathlessly, as Betty Carroll met her.

Mrs. Carroll was astonished at the emphasis on one word of the sentence, but she only said, "I am glad you have. Tom went this morning."

"Where is he?" questioned Blakey.

"He has gone down with the surveyors to look over that property; they are to spend the night at the farmhouse."

This was the reason then for Page's visit. Blakey had not known; it was accident, pure and simple, which had brought him by way of the ferryboat. But Page gave him no credit for it. She was suddenly and unreasonably angry, she was ashamed for herself and scornful of him for the shaming.

She walked ahead of him by Mrs. Carroll's side, her boot heels ringing firmly on the bridge, and there was a lift of her head, a tautening of her inches which struck a feeling of dismay to Blakey, left behind with Nellie.

With the look of an awakened soul in her face the child slipped her hand into his as

they followed. She prattled unconcernedly, but now and then her great eyes looked upwards at the dazed young man with "we know" written plainly in their depths, and her head would give a scornful toss to the slender figure before her in a fashion which was uncanny.

Blakey left them at the gate. Nellie, instead of lingering out of doors in the cool, delicious hour, followed her mother and their guest into the house. They were in the dining-room, and there was the hum of voices and the faint clatter of china as the child stole up the stairs.

How dark it was as she crept up to the dusky attic! How desperately frightened she was, and how her heart pounded in her little body; but she went on, found the thing she sought, and came down again.

The big lamp was lighted on the desk in a corner of the dining-room, and she pulled her low rocking-chair to it and sat down.

Through the kitchen door came Page, a trace of independence still in her air, her dark eyes still aglow with the anger she had felt, though she was laughing at something Betty Carroll said, and her lips had lost their wilful curve.

Betty Carroll followed her. "What are you doing, dear?" the mother asked carelessly, as she arranged a dish on the table.

"Nothing much."

The tone was too demure. Mrs. Carroll came closer, gave a gasp of dismay, and leaned back against the table.

Page's laughter rippled over her lips. There was a hat in Nellie's lap, a hat of battered, faded, soft gray felt, and it was a woman's. The child with slow patient fingers was pinning it upon one side and fastening a bow of ribbon to it. "What are you doing?" cried Page gayly.

"Fixing it," said Nellie, with an air of absolute tranquillity. "I think I will wear it sometimes," she added imperturbably.

"Where on earth did you get it?" It was Page who asked, her mother did not dare, and it was the question for which Nellie waited.

She lifted her lashes and transfixed the girl with a deep, clear gaze.

"Belle left it here," she said plaintively; "it will make me think of her, she was so sweet, and Hugh certainly did love her."

XI

MR. NOTTOWAY was one of the registrars of his district. It had been a difficult duty and one he sought to avoid. He was not a politician, but this was one of the reasons used in urging his acceptance. He was a man who formed his opinions slowly and clung to them tenaciously, who was fair minded so far as it was possible to be — all reasons for the party whose ticket he voted to desire his service.

He had found the disagreeableness of the appointment more than he feared. There were no illiterate whites in the jurisdiction, and every negro disfranchised was deeply resentful. With each it was a personal question and a personal grudge, and with Jesse the trouble had been the worst.

Jesse had been on the farm six years. With little or no ability for thought, he possessed a capacity for obedience which was wellnigh a faculty, and an art of managing his fellow

workers which rendered his usefulness on the farm of the highest order. His wife was as capable in the house as he was in the field. The kitchen behind the old house had been transformed into their home. The apple trees blossomed to its doorway and the murmur of the creek came through its windows. Its floor was as spotless, its wall as white, as any in the big house; and its substantial furniture was the provision of a thoughtful mistress.

When Molly, her day's work done, rocked in her chair before the door, and Jesse smoked his pipe on the low step, and the wind blew among the orchard trees and rustled in the rushes by the creek, they were as content as the mood of nature about them, and seemed as immovable as the rooted growth.

But it was Jesse who had come last of all to the sitting of the registrars.

The counting-room at the side of the store where they held their sitting was foul then with smoke and crowded breathings, and the floor was grimed with mud and the ashes of cigars and stained with tobacco juice — an atmosphere Mr. Nottoway, fastidious in his clean living, loathed. The little room had

scarcely been crowded all day, but the men came in a steady procession or by twos and threes, with jesting from some and rancor from others.

A copy of the constitution, much bethumbed, lay on the ink-spotted table, and the heavy register was opened; lamps had been lighted, the chill of the autumn night was in the room where the winter's fires had not been started, and the cold gray mist of a sea-fog blanketed, outside, the small panes of a curtainless window.

Mr. Nottoway looked at his watch and longed for the closing hour, when there was a shuffling step at the door and Jesse came slowly into the room. The damp dripped from his hat brim and stood in drops on the edges of his woolly hair, and there was a gleam in his black eyes which his employer did not see.

He had drawn the register closer to him.

"Well, Jesse," he called kindly, taking the initiative because the man was in his own employ, "see if you can answer one or two questions and we will put your name down here." The other two men brought down their tilting chairs and leaned their elbows on the table, watching and listening.

"Are you twenty-one years of age?" He looked up at the negro, a gleam of fun in his dark eyes, over which the lids dropped lazily.

There was no amusement in the negro's face, only a tense anxiety; his hands fumbled on his worn wet hat. "Yes, sah," he answered briefly.

"And you have resided in this district, you have lived in this neighborhood, one year?"

There was a note of relief in the negro's voice, it was easier than he thought. "Yes, sah," he repeated.

"And you have paid your poll taxes?"

Jesse hesitated. "Ain't got no pole."

"Your tax which every man over twenty-one must pay?"

"Oh! yes, sah."

"Have you ever served in the army or navy?"

"I was born durin' de war."

"Did your father ever serve in either?"

"Marse Not'way, 'fo' Gawd, what you aftah? you know he did n't."

Mr. Nottoway drew a long breath, the edge of a difficulty was making itself felt. He had made it the special part of his work that day

to explain to each man the necessary qualifications for them to vote, and to show to them that it needed neither money nor learning but simply an understanding of what they were doing, so that their votes counted for the thing they wished, and they should not be helpless tools in the hands of any man. In all the registrars' offices opened throughout the state that day there was no kindlier feeling shown, no deeper patience, no stronger helpfulness, than had been practised here.

"You own no property?" Mr. Nottoway now asked.

"You knows dat as well as I does."

"You cannot read?"

Jesse kept an indignant silence, and the registrar had come to the last of his tests. He had no idea that it would fail; in his estimation Jesse was capable of understanding; it was only necessary that he should show that he was.

He turned to the Declaration of Rights.

"Now, listen; if you can explain any of these, show that you understand what they mean —"

The negro leaned forward.

"'That all men are by nature free and independent—'"

"Dat means dat I am as good as you is," the negro's dialect was strong in his excitement.

"Yes," said his questioner, without the flicker of an eyelash; "in the eyes of the law. 'And have certain inherent rights,'" he went on to read, "'of which when they enter into a state of society they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.'"

He looked up. Jesse's face was twisted into wrinkles of anxious ignorance, and he slowly shook his head.

Mr. Nottoway ran quickly over the sections to the twelfth; that was one of the easiest to be comprehended and one of those most frequently used during the day.

He began to read. "'That the freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic governments; and every citizen may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that right.'"

He ended and looked up at Jesse's uncomprehending eyes. "You know what the freedom of the press means?" he asked helpfully.

"Yes, sah," the negro's face cleared, "it means if you git in a crowd you is got the right to press your way through."

The men beyond Mr. Nottoway roared, and he looked at his farmhand helplessly.

"Jesse," he said, "that won't do, you will have to come up again at the next meeting; you will know when it will be held, and if you will come to me at any time before then, I will do what I can to make you understand."

He flung the heavy cover of the register over its pages and pushed back his chair. "Gentlemen," he said, "I believe it is the hour to close. I am glad of it," he added with a shake of his shoulders, as if getting rid of an unpleasant duty.

No one noticed that Jesse had not moved. As Mr. Nottoway turned he strode close up to him.

"Is my name dyar?" he demanded, pointing with a shaking finger to the leather-bound book on the ink-spotted table.

"No," his employer answered shortly.

"Ain't — ain't you gwine to write it dyar?"

"No. You heard and you understood. I told you —"

Jesse looked past him to the other men. "Ain't you gwine write hit?" he repeated, his voice a hoarse murmur.

They shook their heads, and one of them laughed as the negro rushed out of the room.

"It's a disagreeable duty, a disagreeable duty!" said Mr. Nottoway as he picked up his overcoat.

"Do you know what is the matter with him?" asked the man who had laughed; he was a man from the far end of the district and Mr. Nottoway had but a slight acquaintance with him, and even that he had no desire to improve.

"He's a regular ring leader. I have often wondered if you knew it, he can manage the votes of some twenty-five negroes around here, and he gets just twenty-five dollars every election day for doing it; didn't you know it? Then he goes off and gets drunk, dead drunk."

Mr. Nottoway started. Just so sure as election day came, so surely was Jesse on a

drunken spree for two days, three, sometimes a week; but he was sober enough for work all the rest of the year, and his employer overlooked it because he had to. He was only thankful that it was usually at a time when little work was being done.

"Looks hard," the man went on; "looks like he is awfully cut up. So he is, over the money."

Little more had been said. Mr. Nottoway was the first to go out into the night. The mist struck like rain against his cheek; he could not see a yard before him. He knew the direction in which his horse was tied and went towards it, feeling as if he went through yielding walls of whiteness which closed behind him.

He put his hand on his buggy and followed the outlines to the horse's head. As suddenly as if he had sprung from the earth the fog disclosed a negro standing there.

"Who is this?" demanded Mr. Nottoway sternly.

"Marse Not'way," the voice trembled, "Ise been hyar waitin', is you gwine let me vote?"

"You fool," blazed Mr. Nottoway. "I have nothing to do with it!"

"Ef you says so, de uddahs will. I seed hit in dyar faces."

"They will not, nor can I; it is yourself!"

"I ain't got nuthin' do wid it, nuthin'. You done took it out o' my hands!" Jesse's figure was lost in the mist.

Mr. Nottoway had not forgotten and there had been times when he wondered uneasily if Jesse had. He had looked for a notice of his leaving at the end of the year; but there had been none.

There was a gleam of sullenness, of watchfulness, in the negro now and then, which made his employer wonder uneasily if he had best look out for another man; but Jesse seemed as much a part of the farm and the home life as they themselves, and he put the thought from him and took up the routine at the beginning of the year as he had always done.

Jesse had failed him at no point. Day by day the work of cultivating, of handling and shipping the early crops, had been well done. It was Jesse who hired the new hands for each extra season, and he had gathered the pickers for the strawberries from the county and the

near-by towns; the old house, their "barracks," swarmed with them.

The height of the time for which Mr. Nottoway had worked, the critical point of the entire year, had come. The reddening strawberries were thick in the long furrows. The negroes up and down the rows were working with the lighthearted laughter and jest of their race and with swift fingers. It was Saturday, and at noon they would be paid off for the two days' work of the week; and the thought of hoarded tickets and tickets yet to be worked for, of the afternoon's frolic, and of other things, it may be, added a zest to their work. Box after box, heaped with red fruit, was hurried to the shelter — a rude roofing built over four posts set in the ground at the side of the field — where Mrs. Nottoway counted them and packed them into crates and gave to each bringer of a box the cardboard which meant the price of his work.

At the stable was the sound of hammering as the crates were being fitted together; in the road the wagon waited, and at the wharf lay the small schooner, her sails full set. The telephone wires had brought that morning the

news of quotations which meant for the shipment which had been already made, and for succeeding ones — if nothing went wrong, and never had all conditions seemed to be more nearly right — the payment of debts, the evening up of losses during the bad years before, and the straightening of business tangles.

There was a look on Mr. Nottoway's face of keen elation which his wife had not seen for many months, and there was a joyful bustle of well-ordered haste and of hopeful work all over the farm.

The crates were hurried to the wharf, the boat sailed away, and the pickers formed a long procession under the library window, jostling, laughing, counting their tickets, bragging, cutting the "pigeon wing," as one by one they came beneath the sill and Page, with deft fingers, counted the tickets they gave her and her father sorted their equivalents in bills and coins.

"Now," said Mr. Nottoway as he snapped his desk lock when the last claimant was gone, "I must go up to the store and redeem them there. I want to keep everything straight up to the dot."

A trucker's ticket is as good as his note at any time, is circulated locally as cash by the holders, and he is anxious and prompt to redeem them.

He stopped as he met his wife on the lawn, and spoke of the fine yield, the prospect, and the market; and she, the bustle of the day's work over, stood and watched the glitter of his buggy's wheels in the sunlight as they spun down the straight white road.

Another pair of eyes watched him also. Jesse, as soon as he was out of sight, hurried to the barracks; a word to this man, to that, a lowering of faces while he talked, and he was away, away across the fields, following his employer.

There was no hurry in his steps. He lounged lazily along the road once he had come to it, any place where he could meet Mr. Nottoway would do; but his employer was detained. From the store he drove into town, went to the bank, and it was nearly dark when he came to the store again. Jesse, lounging not far away, watched. When he came out of the door and over to his buggy where it had been left under a huge live-oak, Jesse

stood by it, tall and sullen, with a dull fire of anger in his eyes.

In a flash Mr. Nottoway's mind went back to that moment when he had found him before waiting in such a fashion, and to those words outside the registrar's office; and in one breath Jesse, his voice shaking as it had done that day, was stuttering over that question, "Marse Not'way, is you gwine let me vote?"

"Jesse," said Mr. Nottoway sternly, "what are you doing here?"

"I come to ax you dat question."

"I have nothing to do with it."

"You has; if you says so, I can do it."

Mr. Nottoway was swept with a flood of anger. "I have nothing to do with it except to tell the truth, to tell if you are capable to vote. I told you before that you could learn and I would help you, that if you came to me I would do what I could; you have never asked a question, said a word."

"An' I ain't gwine to."

"Nor done a thing—"

"An' I ain't gwine to!"

"Have you ever asked anybody else, made any effort?"

The negro disdained an answer.

Mr. Nottoway held himself in stern check. In his mind the ignorance of the questioner demanded patience.

"Jesse," he said, "there are four months now before it is time to say anything more about what a man can do. You need not know how to read and write. I told you so before; all you have got to do is to understand the laws so that you know what you are voting for, and are not selling your ticket or doing simply what somebody else tells you to do."

"Humph!" the negro snorted.

"Any man who understands his work as well as you do can understand enough to vote, if he wants to, if he will try."

"Gawd knows I ain't gwine to do a thing."

"Then what is not worth trying for is not worth having, and you can do without," blazed Mr. Nottoway, thoroughly angered at last.

He shook the horse's bridle free from the negro's hand and sprang into the buggy, but Jesse laughed as he turned away and the sound of it rang eerily above the grinding of the wheels in the sandy road.

What could Jesse do? Mr. Nottoway was asking himself, torturing himself at the thought; and Jesse running, stumbling along the field path, was answering it as he ran. "You'll see!" he was muttering aloud; "you'll see!"

XII

MR. NOTTOWAY, the reins loose across the dashboard, his head bent forward, the cigar between his teeth smouldering to a dull glow, was in a maze of self-questioning and self-torture, all the keener because it came so closely on the heels of happiness.

Why had Jesse followed him that day? why had he gone for months and no word about this matter been spoken? what did he mean? how could harm be done? for harm was intended he knew. Back and forth he searched for answers and found none — nothing beyond a vague fear of the unnamable.

Why had this question come to him to determine? his thoughts beat back again. Why had he ever consented to serve on this board of registrars, and so be caught in this coil? God knew that all he wished was to be allowed to conduct his own affairs in peace and to leave others to a like freedom; there was not an

ambition he felt which his own home could not compass, and his most earnest desire was to be left to it.

And again, should he not have temporized? Was it necessary to hold absolutely to the line of duty? Could he not have used the suavity, the slipping past direct issues, which others practised every day?

He heard the sound of rapid wheels approaching, picked up his reins, and drew his horse aside. An open vehicle with three men in it sped by; he never turned his head.

There was a sharp crunching in the road, a call, "Nottoway! Nottoway!" He pulled up as one of the men jumped from the drag and hurried back to him.

"Well, well!" the man laughed; "and here we came near going by you."

"Governor!" exclaimed Mr. Nottoway in sharp surprise. "What are you doing down here?"

"I am not surprised at your asking," the governor cut him short and laughed as he pointed up the road. It was his own team he saw there. "With Mrs. Nottoway's permission," the governor explained suavely, and then hastened

with other explanations also. "We came down on my yacht," he went on quickly. "Left Richmond this morning at daybreak. Not a soul knows where we are; unless I am much mistaken," he added hurriedly. "We are out on the bay having a lark, resting over Sunday, — anything they may say; but they don't know this."

He put his foot on the hub of the wheel and leaned over, talking to the man in the buggy. "The truth is, there are some things down here that need looking after. I didn't want to steam into Norfolk. Lord! it would have been known in Richmond in half an hour. I have put in at your wharf; the yacht is there, shipshape. Use her if you want to, and let me have your team until Monday night. I told your wife. Take your family out to-morrow. I have turned the whole thing over to you. The captain has his orders, and will obey you until I come back. I took it for granted you would have a team to spare, and am using it; you must do the same with the yacht if you want her."

The governor went on to talk more seriously of men and political matters, to ask a searching

question now and then, and to listen absorbedly to the answers given him; for if Mr. Nottoway were not a politician he knew the field well, and his opinions were weighty with those who knew where to look for information.

The truth was not what the governor at first so carelessly confided; but that some fences needed looking after, and he was doing the looking. The next campaign meant much to the state.

The men in the drag waited impatiently, the horses turning and twisting in their harness; the low wind tossed the pale green palmate leaves of the black gum overhead, rustled in the sere ghosts of last year's weeds along the roadside, and swayed the greenery of the springtide's growth. The red was gone from the sky and the outlines of the distant fields were blurred when the governor went back to his party, and Mr. Nottoway, his fears forgotten in fresh and vivid thoughts, drove rapidly on.

The land homeward, when he reached it, lay ghostly and deserted; the shed by the road was empty; the green fields, dusky and indistinct along the horizon, showed no living creature.

Mr. Nottoway had a swift mental vision of the pickers as he had often seen them, lounging about their barracks, on the doorstep, on the beach or around the fagot fires on which their suppers cooked.

He turned into the way stableward. The cows lowed in the milking lot, untended. No one moved about the stable stalls or busied over the last work of the day. He looked from left to right and then he caught the reins so sharply that the horse reared upon his haunches; far away, on the edge of his fields, along the path to the country road, went a long procession, ghostly in the dusk. Indian fashion they went in file and in silence; but the silence was not that of alert watchfulness, it was wrathful sullenness. So across the dusky fields was written in living characters the story of the negro's revenge.

He threw himself from the buggy, he ran around behind the stables to the barracks; the opened door creaked in the wind and the opened windows gaped untenanted; he ran to the old kitchen where Molly had lived, serene, happy. It was orderly, but of clothes and personal belongings it was swept clean. He

hurried up the path under the apple trees; and there on the kitchen step sat his wife, white and scared and helpless, the tears running down her cheeks. Of all the swarm of workers which had buzzed about the farm that day, they two alone were left.

XIII

UNDER the stars Page was rowing homeward. Hugh Blakey was at the oars. The magic of the star gleams, of soft winds stealing over wide waters, of the murmuring of the waves, of the rhythm of the oars and the breaking waves under their bow, demanded speech which came from the heart or silence. They were silent; but a pulse of thought beat between them which was as strong and steady as the tide. It beat in Blakey's veins, throbbed in his heart, and kept him, always so quick of utterance, dumb. It rang in Page's heart like the refrain of a song low and distant but insistent.

There were no haunting memories in the young man's mind of subtle changes in Page's manner — Nellie's sharp lesson had borne its fruit; of a difference towards him which was but an unspoken apology for misjudgment; of an effort to please which was but an awakening to his personality; of the deeper thoughts

towards which their talk tended; of the glad surprise Page showed to find a sympathy and understanding she had not looked for; of the gradual unfolding of a bud so beautiful yet so reluctant in its growth that Blakey feared to mar it by a breath. It had been enough to live and enjoy and hope; it was enough now to dream and listen to the voices of the sea, hinting, half singing, some beat of a heart song, losing it, listening for it in the low sigh of the winds, the rhythmic pulse of the oars, but never hearing the mystery revealed. The hours held it still unsolved, kept it as a phase which might pass.

They came out from the shadow of the bridge and the gleam of the yacht shone before them, the reflection of the beams of light lying in long, broken, wavering lines upon the rippling river. Blakey rowed faster but towards the beach, and as they neared it a straight figure came out from the shadows of the trees. It was Mr. Nottoway, and he looked as if he awaited them.

"Were you looking for us?" cried Page gayly, "are we late? You were not uneasy?" She put her hands on Blakey's arms as she

jumped from the boat, and he knew that only the presence of that silent figure restrained the hot words upon his lips.

"You see I took a holiday too," referring to the Saturday afternoon; "are you — is anything the matter?" she asked, dismayed by his stiff silence.

"No," the tone was curt, "run along to your mother, Page; she needs you." He spoke as if anxious to be rid of her, as he was. He was determined to have speech of Blakey.

But Page lingered, half frightened, anxious, feeling somehow the electric tingle and tension of strangeness and strong emotion.

"Go on!" The words were so positive that Page, with a disdain of the hurt she could not help feeling, hurried away without a word into the blackness of the tree-shadowed lawn.

Blakey was furious with the apparent affront. In an instant he connected Mr. Nottoway's manner with himself and strode towards him. "Is there anything you wish to say to me?" he demanded haughtily.

"God only knows," Mr. Nottoway answered slowly, "God only knows if there is anything for me to say to any man."

"What is the matter?" Blakey was still curt.

"I do not know. God, but I do! I do know, I want to tell you, I want you to listen —" He broke off abruptly to master his speech, to master himself. He had thought there under the trees, where he had come to face this calamity and fight it out with himself, until he was benumbed and fairly crazed. As soon as he saw the boat and heard Blakey's voice he resolved to tell him. Confidence? it was an affair which would be known in a day from one side of the country to the other, — it was a necessity for speech which constrained him.

He began slowly and far back. He spoke of the condition of his farm, the promise of the season, the state of his fields, his shipment that day, the market quotations that evening, putting the facts in clear order, dwelling on them briefly, as if he were building a story word by word. He picked up the thread of his obligations as registrar, his dislike of the duty, the trouble it had caused him; spoke of the dispute with Jesse, told the tale of that day; and he ended with a bitter statement, — "I am a ruined man!"

"The idea! it is impossible; you have but

to look about you and be quick about it! How long have they been gone? have you done nothing?"

"There is nothing to be done."

"Do you suppose those hands are the only ones to be gotten, with all the negroes about here? Why, man, you ought to start out yourself, you ought to have gone at once."

"It 's no use!" Mr. Nottoway spoke curtly. Blakey began a hot protest, but he was cut short.

"What Jesse did once he would do again."

"He would not dare."

"He has dared! and there is no law can touch him," Mr. Nottoway went on. "I have thought it all out. I left Anna alone in that big empty house and came here to fight it out myself, and it 's ruin, ruin, that 's all!"

"I 'll find hands myself," declared Blakey passionately.

"What would be the use? They would not pay for the trouble and expense of getting them here; in twenty-four hours they would be gone."

"How did he do it? What influence did he have?"

"God only knows! There is some secret understanding among them. I believe there always has been. Perhaps it 's stronger now. I don't know." His voice trailed off hopelessly, brokenly.

Blakey picked up another thread; twice that word ruin had struck on his ear. "You say you are ruined?" he asked sharply.

"I am."

"You?" Blakey made a wide sweep of his arm behind him, and Mr. Nottoway understood.

"It will take half of it to pay my bills at the bank," he said shortly.

"Yes," in answer to Blakey's sharp exclamation, "half! We have caught two bad years," he went on straightforwardly, "and Page — God knows she was welcome to all I could do for her, but her bills were enormous, she never knew, I never said anything. I should have! It 's best for a man to have no secrets from his family; but I spoke once of sending for her to come home, Anna would not listen to it, and nothing would do, her mother said, but that she must go abroad last summer. That cost me another thousand, exactly, and the hospital

and the surgeon — well, that finished me up. But Page never knew a word, a word. She did what her mother planned, and when Anna would ask — I never knew how to say no to her, to either of them.

"Weakness? I suppose so. But one good year would have pulled me through — that or economy. I preferred to risk the first. I took my chances. A man 's forever taking them. It 's the first time I ever failed. I would not have done so now but for that scoundrel."

"If you had the hands now?"

"The strawberries in my field — God, it 's enough to make a man crazy! Think of it — my work, my need — helpless!"

Blakey caught him by the arms. "Whose yacht is that?"

"The governor's."

"The governor's! Where is he?"

"Back in the country."

"How long is he to stay?"

"Until Monday."

"Who commands the boat?"

"The captain, I suppose," testily.

"Have you the use of her?"

"Oh yes," with a bitter laugh. "I am to

take my family out in her for a pleasure jaunt if I choose. She is quite at my disposal."

"She is? Come! come along!" Blakey swung him off towards the wharf.

"What's the matter?"

"Come along! hurry!" sharply.

"Go on. I am not coming."

"You shall." Blakey caught him by the arm. "Oh, come on, man!" he pleaded; "something may be done. I think — I see — come on!"

He half ran along the beach and out on the wharf, dragging the other with him.

The yacht was brilliantly lighted, a curl of smoke floated from her stack; the captain lounged on the deck, the sailors leaned over the rails.

Blakey was scarcely civil in his hurry and scarcely to be understood in his vehemence.

"Captain! Glad to see you! Yes; fine evening! What are you doing? Got your fires banked?"

"No."

"And you are under Mr. Nottoway's orders?"

"So long as the governor is away."

"How much coal aboard?"

"A little more than enough to take us to Richmond," answered the astonished officer.

"Then signal the bridge! Look alive, man; don't stand there! You are acting under Mr. Nottoway's orders! You understand? He has turned his authority over to me. I tell you this is no time to stand there! Get ashore!" to Mr. Nottoway.

The captain never moved.

With the quick incisiveness of his law training, Blakey ran over the points of the position. The captain was no willing coadjutor, but he saw nothing to do but to obey.

"Where are you going?" he asked sullenly.

"I'll tell you when you get outside. Wait!" Blakey sprang after Mr. Nottoway. Far away as he was, his quick eyes had seen the gleam of a light dress on the lawn.

"Mr. Nottoway," — he caught him again by the arm, — "there's your daughter out there. Make her go into the house; it's not safe. Look after your wife and daughter."

"In God's name," cried Mr. Nottoway angrily, as he shook the young man's hand from his arm, "what fool's trick are you up to?"

"I am going," said Blakey, as sweetly as if

he were acknowledging the blandest of compliments, "I am going to bring you the hands to pick your crops. Look for us to-morrow about midnight."

Before he could answer a word Blakey was back on the yacht, the smoke puffed from her brightened fires, and the shrill whistles sent their message to the man drowsing in the little house midway the bridge.

"Where are you going?" repeated the captain gruffly, as the slow click of wood and iron closed the way behind them.

"To Baltimore!"

XIV

THE silence which lay on the farm was deeper than Sabbath stillness. The roses tossed in the wind and the maples rocked softly; the tide rippled along the beach and crept in sibilant flow through the tall green rushes; the shimmer of warmth and of sunshine lay over the deserted fields, and the salt air swept through the empty old kitchen and the tenantless barracks. There was no ringing of the telephone, no eager questions. The sick-hearted man shrank into his home shell with no tentacles reaching to the outside world. He heard but the pulsations of his own heart, pulsations that set themselves to one wearisome rhythm, — "Wait! wait!"

Wait, while the sun climbed the sky; wait, while slowly, immeasurably slowly, he sank towards the west; wait, while the twilight brought with it weird imaginings and the night thrilled with fear.

"Midnight," Blakey had said. It was im-

possible, the whole mad impulse! What folly had kept his hands tied at home all day? Yet what could he have done? Bruited the tale abroad, shouted out for sympathy!

He shut his teeth firmly. He would send the women of his household to bed; but they would not go.

Silence and the hush of midnight, and still they waited, heart-sick and pulses running slow and courage low at the ebbtide of daily life. It grew chill, cold; they did not know it. The stars gleamed large and pale, and the man pausing in his restless walk leaned against the porch pillar, looked out on the silent river, and groaned.

"You had better go to bed," he turned to say; "it is useless. You must," he commanded sharply.

His wife, stiff from the long cold and the long-held attitude, got to her feet slowly, went to him, and put her arm about his neck. Page, back in the corner of the porch, under the heavy shadows of the thick climbing honeysuckles, cried bitterly, quietly.

The wind tossed a breath of fragrance from the roses, a bird in a nest in the honeysuckle

waked and gave a plaintive twitter and nestled down again. Suddenly, shrill, piercing, and repeated insistently, came another sound on the air.

Page slid to her knees, her arm on the porch rail, her head buried upon it; but the two on the step were as motionless as stone.

"He may not have succeeded," had been the man's caution to his wife's rapturous cry.

"He must have, he must!" she repeated under her breath, as bejewelled with lights the little steamer shone on the dusky river.

Page sprang to her feet and rushed past them. Before they knew it they were running after her across the dew-wet grass, their footsteps as swift as hers.

The beat of the yacht's engines was in the air; ever and again the signals called to the empty wharf and the black land which looked deserted; her white hull showed faintly and the long lines of broken light gleamed in the water through which she cleft her way.

Page leaned against a tall pile, her hands pressed against her heaving breast, her will holding in check the very pounding of the blood in her veins, as her whole being was

intent on eager watchfulness. Her father and mother were by her side. There was not even the sound of their own breathing; only the river's flow, and the engine's beat, and the water's swirl about the yacht, and the dash beneath the wharf and upon the shore of the long swells she set in motion. Slowly in the dark the boat came nearer, turned her broadside to the wharf, and they saw her decks — *crowded!*

"Oh!" cried Page softly; "oh!" as she beat the palms of her hands for joy upon the rough pile against which she leaned.

The yacht scraped against the wharf and set the planks shivering. A sailor threw out a rope to that straight figure looming sharply up from the dusk of the wharf, who caught it, slipped the noose at the end around a pile, while still no word was called or spoken. The thud of the gang plank sounded loudly as it was flung from the yacht to the pier; a man ran across, rushed to that silent figure, caught him by the shoulder, and swung him to the time of his cry, — "They are here! they are here!"

And then the man who waited said slowly

and reverently and with the lifting of a load so heavy that even the loosing cut into the soul, "Thank God!"

"Get out of the way," Blakey cried, a thrill of excitement in his short laugh. "Here they come!"

The procession streamed over the gangway, — men, women, and children, bundles and baskets. Nothing could be made of them in the dark but that they were sleepy and cross and wondering.

"Show them the way to the barracks!" called Blakey. "Lord, what a time we have had with them. Now there, this way! I turn them over to you!" he exclaimed to Mr. Nottoway.

He had seen that slight figure shrinking against the pile, and he hurried over to her as the workers huddled together listening to Mr. Nottoway's few excited directions. His wife hovered about the women and children. "Now there, this way!" he commanded at last, and they took up the march.

Blakey stood before the girl without a word. Light laughter was on his lips; he caught her hands and held them as the tramp and shuffle

of footsteps rang on the pier and crunched in the gravel of the beach.

Behind him the lights of the yacht shone and the quick commands of the captain rang out as he cleared his decks of what he termed "the filth of the cattle"; but these two were in shadow. Blakey could feel the quick, joyous pulse of the blood in her finger-tips and see the delight in her eyes through the dusk. He slipped her hand through his arm; the footsteps died away and they followed.

"My soul," he began gayly, "what a time we have had! It would take a book to tell it! Such a lot as they are. They ate and slept all over the place. The captain vows it will take him until to-morrow night to clean up the boat, and he is scared into a fever for fear the governor will come back sooner than he is expected and catch him before he can get things shipshape again. He was ready to throw me overboard until I told him the whole business — every bit of it — before we reached Baltimore. Then he vowed he would help us out; his blood was up.

"Well, I found them all right." They were walking slowly along the gravelled pathway

under the black shadow of the trees. "Strange how one may find use for a bit of information he hears so carelessly that he never thinks of it again — until it is needed. When I was in Baltimore some man was asking me about our trucking country down here, and our seasons and customs. He told me of their market farms and of these people, — 'crews' they call them. They flock about the old market near the 'Falls' as soon as the season begins — bums of every description. Sometimes a farmer sends in a big wagon for some of them; sometimes a sailing vessel comes up the slip and waits to take a lot down to Anne Arundell. Anyway, I remembered even the name of a man who could get them together for me.

"I found him. At first he said it could not be done, it was Sunday; but we soon settled all that, and here they are," he ended lightly, as they reached the porch steps.

He sat down on the lowest one. "I am tired," he acknowledged, as an excuse for doing so.

He had said not a word of the difficulties which had seemed insurmountable, the trouble

in getting the people together, of obtaining a supply of coal on Sunday; but it was these which would have made the book he spoke of. He sat still, brain and body numb with fatigue.

As far away as the barracks were, they could hear the hum of voices and the sounds of movement, and a light gleamed in the old kitchen, a quick step crunched on the path, and Mr. Nottoway joined them. Blakey got up slowly. It was all he could do to restrain the impulse towards a sleepy stretch of his arms. "I think I will go down to the yacht and get some sleep," he said.

"You will do nothing of the sort. You will stay here. You will find a room ready for you upstairs over the library. Page, do you know what your mother is doing? She is clearing the store room of every bit of bread and meat, and every drop of milk she can find she is sending down there to them. She is disobeying all orders strictly, but still — George! Blakey, but they are a lot! Page!"

But that young woman was gone. Her father had not noticed her flight kitchenwards, but Blakey's eyes had watched the slender fig-

ure until it crossed the square of light the opened door let out into the blackness of the night and disappeared.

"She has gone to help her mother," her father concluded. "Well, I don't know that I have any fault to find with either of them." He laughed softly; he could laugh now.

"Blakey!" he came a step closer and put his hands on the young man's shoulders, but no words would come to tell him what he wished to say.

"Oh, if you mean you are obliged and all that," said Blakey nervously, "that's all right. I tell you I enjoyed doing it; but they are a great crowd."

It was a safe refuge for both men, this amused view of the newcomers.

"There's one there," went on Blakey quickly, "who will make a good man, unless I am much mistaken, and I can usually tell what's in a man pretty quick. He seems a quiet, steady, off-to-himself sort of fellow; yet he got along with the rest all right, too. A gentleman gone under, perhaps. I've seen that sort."

"I have not noticed him. Come upstairs. I will show you the way."

He picked up a lighted lamp from the library table and started up, Blakey following him.

The circle of light the lamp cast danced dizzily before the young man's eyes; he yawned sleepily as he stood in the bedroom, looking about him. "I should like to see the governor's face when he hears of this," he said with a laugh.

Mr. Nottoway was reminded of the only message which had come over the wire that day.

"The governor wants to see you," he said quickly; "wants to know if you will meet him here to-morrow night."

"To-morrow? to-night you mean," as the crowing of the fowls and the early twitter of the birds came up through the open window.

"Fact, it is; but I feel as if I could stay awake for a week."

"I am sorry to say that I do not."

"You must go to bed at once, Blakey—" Again his voice broke, but this time he controlled it. "You have saved me!"

"I think I have." Blakey strove to keep his voice light, but he could not.

"I shall not forget." And Mr. Nottoway went out, shutting the door softly. Worn out as he was, half dead with fatigue, Blakey could not go at once to sleep. What could the governor want with him? The question sent an electric thrill along his pulses.

XV

WITH all the splendid energy of his nature Blakey flung himself into the next day's work.

"Why can't you telephone into your office and see if there is anything particular calling you?" Mr. Nottoway asked; "and if not stay over until night? I wish you would. I feel as if — well, you know what you have done already. And you have managed these people some and — and you could get us started."

Blakey stayed. It was he who went to the store for supplies and told a tale of Mr. Nottoway's business enterprise which kept the clerk busy all day in repeating it. The "pickers," with the poverty and carelessness of their kind, had neither money nor provisions; and it was best they should not frequent the stores; no one knew what Jesse might attempt.

It was Blakey who found the carpenter for the fitting of the crates, and the driver for the wagon, and declared, as he watched the busy

crew in the strawberry field, that it was the best lot of workers ever seen in the county; and it was he who, at the evening's close, when the day's shipment had been made and the last quotations had come over the wire, was ready to throw up his hat and hurrah like a boy. But Mr. Nottoway's other words instantly sobered him.

"Well," he said carelessly, though his eyes were shining with the gleam of success, "the governor will be along presently"; and the words set throbbing the current of wonder which had run all day under the surface excitement.

But the young man was too well trained to betray anxiety. When the governor came at last Blakey might have been meeting any casual guest. As the men came out from the late supper and lingered about the doorway, lighting their cigars, the governor was by Blakey's side. Talking to him carelessly, he loitered down the steps, and by accident, suggestion, or design the rest of the party were left behind.

They strolled down the pathway, the governor walking leisurely, looking from side to

side as if in critical enjoyment, and blowing the rings of smoke from his cigar upwards into the evening air; the roses hung heavy heads by the borders, and the early dew lay on flower and shrub and grass.

"Beautiful place," said the governor, his slow footsteps carrying him further and further from the porch and the people there, from listening ears and entangling interests.

Blakey, wondering at his whim, kept the lazy time of his steps.

"I don't know a man in the state who ought to be happier; such a home, such a wife, and such a daughter."

Blakey was obvious of the keen glance towards him at the utterance of that last word. He was thinking of the daughter so deeply that he was not as attentive as he should be to the man at his side. The day had been too full for thought or memories, they had been, each of them, but factors in the rush; but now, at the end of it, when he was fatigued, unthinking, unresisting, the thought of her would not be denied.

"A man like him," the governor sighed with a momentary pang of envy, "does not know what care is."

Blakey's laughter was wellnigh across his lips. Little did the governor know — though he had been told what part he and his had been called upon to play in the tale — little did he know the reading between the lines; and he need not. The young man was loyal, and the governor was left to his own decipherings.

"As independent as a king," he went on. "The very best the world produces grows on his acres. He spreads a table an epicure might sigh for and sigh in vain; the fluctuations of the business world do not touch him; whatever men are doing, whatever enterprise fails, whatever markets are closed, there is one thing they all must have, — food. Here the trucker is independent, absolutely; he supplies the staple product of the world."

So his listener would have said forty-eight hours ago. He had a clearer insight now.

"He loads at his own wharf," their slow saunter had led them to the short pier. The yacht had gone into Norfolk; there was no secret to guard now the enterprise had been accomplished. The wharf was deserted. The tide rushing strongly in beat against the piles and sent the spray dashing to the plank's edge;

and the restlessness which it ever voices was in its beat and in the wind and the sound of the sea.

"He loads at his own wharf," the governor repeated, "the produce of his own acres, and it turns to gold quicker than if he dug it from the mines." The governor grew rhetorical, but if he had designs in his flowery speech they were not fulfilled. He finished his peroration lamely. "He is the most independent man in the world, and the happiest."

Still Blakey was silent. He thrust his hands in his coat pockets and stood looking down at the dashing waves.

The governor leaned against a pile, his cigar between his teeth, as if all he cared for was a moment's respite in the midst of surroundings which seemed to invite it.

"How long have you been down?" he asked, as if the matter were of little interest except by way of conversation.

"A day only," quickly.

"Oh! I mean how long have you been living here, Blakey?"

"Three years."

"Like it?" with a careless puff at his cigar.

"Yes," indifferently.

"Great country!"

"The greatest on God's earth."

The governor's laugh was irritating. Blakey wheeled and faced him. "The greatest on God's earth," he repeated. "I tell you, sir, the very heart of the state beats here. You see our arteries; they are stretched in iron rails all over the state, all over the country, north, south, west. You see our highway to the world; the sound of its rushing is at your feet. We are the future of Virginia; we were its past. It is here, sir, up along that same body of water, whose waves you hear beating upon these shores which are forever famous, that the first English sail that ever flecked the Chesapeake passed to its chosen haven and founded a settlement, not many miles away, the rings of which history spread and widened until they circled the world.

"It is here that the men lived whose names have been so carried around the world; here in eastern Virginia. It is here, so near that it belongs to us, that Bacon waged the first war for independence in the new world. It is here, all about us, that the Puritans set up their

sturdy claims of independent faith, and, rather than submit to even an outward compulsion, were lost to us and gained by a sister state. It is here, at Norfolk, that the earliest trafficking of our country began, at the log wharves where ships lay for trade in tobacco and turpentine.

"It is here that the keynote of the state was sounded. We lost it once, when the plantations were stripped of labor and the land seemed of no value because—" the thread of his argument slipped a little, but he picked it up again, "we will ring it—"

"Until the rings spread round the world!"

It would have better served the governor's turn to have kept silent, but the touch was irresistible.

"We have already done so," said Blakey stiffly, as he turned away and looked, but this time with unseeing eyes, down at the salt spray dashing upwards; and he was silent.

"Yes," said the governor meditatively, as if he were moved to a reluctant admission; "it's true, every word of the history you claim. You had the past, you will have the future. The rest of the state—" He had taken a fresh

cigar from his pocket and now gave it a comprehensive flourish before he turned to scratch a match against the pile, — "It has never been much," he said nonchalantly.

"Much?"

"Just between us, of course!"

"Much!" Blakey's voice was like the scorching of a flame. "Who was it, sir, when the colonies were like puny infants stranded along the coast of a wilderness, each suffering beneath its tyrannies, and in its weakness incapable of redress — who was it sent to the farthest settlement, arranged a mode of intercourse from one to another, and bound each to the others' assistance, so striking the first note of sisterhood? Virginia!

"Who was it when resistance became warfare for life and death, who was it that furnished the leader of the colonial forces, the wisest general under whom the men of America have ever fought? Virginia!

"Who was it when victory had been won by a commandership almost superhuman, and a new country was struggling towards life, who gave that same leader for the first president of the United States of America? Virginia!

"Who was it who gave the doctrines of democracy to the world? Who made the first attempt to remove by legislation the stain of slavery from her scutcheon? Who was it, when the strain of feeling between the sections was strong and bitter, when the strand broke here and there, who strove still for union and reason and peace? Virginia. To whom at last, when war was inevitable, was offered the sword of the army of the North and of the army of the South? A son of Virginia! Virginia — and —"

The quiet laugh of the governor brought the young man's impassioned speech to an abrupt ending.

"Well, well!" he chuckled gracelessly. "No wonder you won the medal for oratory at the university! What do you do with it?"

"Keep it," shortly.

"And your degree, what have you done with that?" The question was stern and sharp.

"Kept it too."

"Like the unused talent?" and a ring of scorn almost too slight to notice was in the governor's tone; but Blakey heard.

"I have unwrapped it when there was need."

"In other words, you have hung out your shingle and dabbled in wildcat real estate."

"Governor," Blakey was so furious that the words were a hoarse murmur, "this is a free country."

The governor was imperturbable. "It is," he admitted calmly, "but a man should have freedom nowhere to ruin himself."

"Ruin!" Blakey strode a step nearer; his hands were clenched in his pockets.

"It is ruin," the voice was cold and stern, "when a man's interests point a higher way and he takes a lower path."

"It is no question of high ways or low ways; it is a question of making a living."

"Are you making one?" The trenchant words cut to the bone. "Blakey, if I had spoken without some purpose — some profound reason — I had been unpardonably insolent — "

"You have said it," said the young man between his set teeth.

But the governor was immovable. He had yet another home thrust in reserve. "Blakey," he asked coolly, "why don't you cut it and go home?"

"Go home!" Blakey wheeled away because

his hands were twitching in his pockets, because they were alone and he could not tell what mad deed might follow as a man who had no warrant for such interference held and picked at the fabric of his life and shook its marred weaving before his eyes.

"You are needed at home," that calm, strong voice went on. "It is because I see the need, and others see it, that I have dared to ask, to say what I have said. I wanted to see for myself; I wanted you to see — "

"There is no need of me," Blakey cut the governor's speech in two; "none that I know of."

"No? Did you never think that a man owes a duty to the name he bears?"

"My father — " began Blakey bitterly.

"Because he has shirked that duty it is but the more imperatively laid upon you. Yours is the burden of two generations."

No answer.

"How have you borne it?" tersely.

"A man has a right to do as he pleases."

"Never!"

"To live his life as it best suits him."

"He has no such right. His only right consists in this, — bravely to do his best."

"I have tried." Blakey's head was bent, his voice softened.

"But not in the right path. There is another—"

"You have a plan, something you want me to do; what is it?"

The governor had yet another question before he answered any. "Where do you vote?" he asked.

"Home."

He gave a nod of satisfaction. Then he spoke the words he had to say. "I want you to go home and take up the fight in your county for member of legislature."

"Chapman will be nominated."

"He wishes to withdraw. The man's health is broken, his wife is a confirmed invalid, he cannot leave her, and he is himself unfit! He has already served long enough; you must take his place."

"I cannot do it."

"Why?" sharp as a shot.

"I cannot stay at home—it stifles me; the grass in the streets chokes me," with an attempt at whimsicality.

"Pshaw! What's the real trouble?"

He answered in two words, — "My father!"

"Why —" began the governor.

Blakey interrupted him. "I feel — I fear — God! rather than grow like him, rather even than feel it stealing on me, I would die this minute — die and be lost there," with a toss of his hand out towards the black waters.

Blakey was one of the men to whom the governor looked for the rebuilding of some breaks and the prevention of others; to use him, test him, press him into the fight, was one of the purposes of this secret trip. Every word he heard deepened his interest and desire to use him. "Tell me of your father," he asked, following the clew Blakey had given. "What does he do?"

"Eats, sleeps, yarns on the store porch."

"Is that all?" in a relieved tone.

"All! It is the life of a beast!"

The governor came to Blakey's side, flicked the end from his cigar, and watched the red ashes seethe into the spray.

"Boardman is organizing the other party," he said reflectively, "and working like a beaver. He is more dangerous than people think. Systematic, untiring work tells any-

where. He is relying on Van Horton, too; boasting of what he expects him to do for the party."

"Van Horton! What does he know of him?"

There was an old estate in Blakey's county from which the line of owners had died away, when the romantic story of sudden wealth accruing to a son of one of those who had been compelled to seek their fortunes elsewhere and the buying back of the home place had startled the county. No one knew much of the new owner.

"Boardman claims to have heard from him; that is, he has been in communication with his mother. He has the audacity for anything, even such a correspondence. But the man — he is a young man, I believe — is away; travelling, I think. There 's a mystery somewhere. But Boardman needs a good active opponent, and," laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "you are the man."

He felt the twitching of Blakey's muscles, but waited for the words to have their effect.

"You need not be at home much more than you are now. I doubt if you would have the

chance. You will be needed all over the country.

"And when you are elected," he went on, as if that were a foregone conclusion, "we will have you in Richmond. Richmond is almost as interesting as Norfolk," he added slyly, and laughed at the jest; but Blakey showed no appreciation.

"I cannot do it," he repeated. "I have no money."

"The party will furnish funds, and you are just as sure of election as you are of standing here."

"I do not see it."

"Man, with all your boasted knowledge of your state, have n't you learned your people yet? A few such speeches as you have given me the benefit of — don't you know the slogan of our men? Take a mass of them. In appearance they may be as careless as clods, but sound the cry of our history, call upon our honored names, and you wake a flame of fire in every man's heart that sweeps the country before it. It needs but a skilful hand, a glowing speech, for the beginning. You have both waiting to be used.

"And let me tell you,"—he tapped the young man on the arm to emphasize each word of his speech,—"that flame has never been put out. It is the sacred fire fed by every generation born in this old state, God bless her! It smoulders out of sight sometimes; the ashes of disaster and helplessness have blanketed it deep, but it is there alive, undying. It will be so, please God, until that day when the fire of a regenerated state, come into her future, sweeps up to heaven and adds its own brilliancy to the radiance of our glorious country!"

XVI

THE governor added two pertinent sentences: "In that work you have a part," and then as they neared the porch, "Take a month to decide; it will be time enough then." He added a pertinent influence also: he kept the company clustered about him with no time for confidences, and when he left he carried Blakey with him.

When the dawn of the next day broke, the fever of excitement on the farm had vanished with the night, and the happy plodding of settled activity was in its stead.

Before sunrise Mr. Nottoway and his wife were busy with accounts and tickets in the library, and Page was in the kitchen. She had demanded her share in the work with a vim and a gay assurance of her ability which had astonished her father, dulled as he was by the swift alternation from despair to hope. She could cook, she had declared, and would take charge of the kitchen; and she blessed the

unforgotten skill which made her a factor in the fight.

The kitchen window was flung wide. The fire crackled in the stove where the biscuit browned, the coffee steeped, and the rest of the meal was being cooked. Page, waiting for it, leaned her round arms on the window sill, and propped her chin upon them, and gazed out into the morning, with eyes heavy from sleepiness. The governor had stayed until midnight, and they had awakened with the stirring of the birds.

A great syringa beneath the window, heavy with dew and blossomings, bent its long arms earthwards, and from it the grass ran smooth to the apple trees, and the old house and the creek flushed like a rose with sunrise.

The new workers swarmed on the beach, about the barracks, and under the gnarled trees. A thin cloud of smoke floated above the chimneys at either end of the house, and the pungent odors of a fagot fire mingled with the subtle perfume coaxed out by dew and dawn. The red-shawled and black-haired women bending above the embers, the glint of the coffee pots above the coals, and the

slouching figures of the men made the heavy tones in the picture, against a background of mist curling from the river's breast, and the opalescent skies.

But though the robin sang, and the grass sparkled with dew, and the flowers beneath the window were cloyingly sweet, Page was heavy with sleepiness. She leaned her head against the window frame and the sounds and sights about her drifted vaguely away.

A footstep, a low exclamation, and she sprang to her feet, leaned over the sill, and gazed across the drift of white blossoms into a face as startled as her own. It was a young man, tall and slender as a sapling, and tanned and roughened by work, who looked back at her with the luminous eyes of a dreamer.

It was he who spoke. "Can I see Mr. Nottoway?"

"He is in the library," Page answered. She was scarcely wide awake, and was surprised and unsure of herself.

The questioner, not understanding his direction, hesitated. Page came to the door. "If you will go round to the porch — Come, I will go with you."

The man's quick glance noted the bare rounded arms and the fleck of flour upon them, the piquant charm of the fair face and dark liquid eyes, and the black masses of her silky, waveless hair, as she ran down the step and led the way along the broad path sprinkled with sea sand. He walked by her side, his frayed cap in his hand, and a glance, so quick that he was unconscious of it, told her that his hair was wet and clinging heavily to his forehead, and that his face and the throat that showed through the open collar of his coarse shirt were red and glowing.

Page shrugged her shoulders. The river was cold at such an hour and season, too cold for even her hardihood, and yet she was sure that he had braved it. She stole another glance towards him as they crossed the porch, — the healthy sunburned face, the well-knit figure, which hinted more of muscle than of flesh, — and she walked back to the kitchen with a puzzled frown between her brows.

Still, in a day or two she might have forgotten the impression he had made but for her father.

Mr. Nottoway was sharing his difficulties and

experiences with his household. It was what he liked to do, and secrecy had gone far towards wrecking him once. One of the resolves wrested from his trial was that hereafter his womankind should know his affairs, and there should be no sailing under false colors. He would be open and above board. He stated his trouble the first day they were left to themselves.

"I have got to find a man out of this gang to take Jesse's place," he announced. "I must keep some of these people here," he said again, "four or five of them at least, until midsummer, and one or two all the year. I must. It is the only thing left to do. I could give them such a home as they have never had — if they only had sense enough to know it."

"I have found the very man I want," he at last declared jubilantly; "the very man, sensible, quick, quiet. I declare — " but that sentence was never finished. Mr. Nottoway was faintly bewildered over the young man's qualifications, they were so far ahead of anything he had ever before found in the labor world.

Finally he told them. "He is going to stay. I have asked him. He says it is the first time

he has ever tried trucking and he knows little about it; but he will learn, no trouble about that. He seems to understand everything at once, and he has the most remarkable influence over the others, keeps them moving and up to time, and in a good humor too. He has already picked out the two I want to have stay the year round. I have been talking to him about it all along, you know, and he said he would see what he could do. It is that German and his wife, Anna—" he was talking over the day's happenings at the supper table. "He will make an excellent hand, and the woman can work in the kitchen. Yes," to Page's exclamation, "just as soon as the rush is over she can take your place." There was a teasing accent in the last words. "You can stand it a day or two longer, can't you?"

Page laughed at the anxious tone of the question. She could "stand it," but she was growing tired. Three meals a day, and the days running into weeks until three were past, was more than she in her ignorance of detail had reckoned on. The edge of her enthusiasm were slightly dulled, and idleness was taking on an added allurement in her eyes. But the pea

picking followed close upon the marketing of the berries. Prices kept up, the furrows faded out of her father's face, and her mother's laugh rang as gayly as a bird's song. No labor was heavy with such a reward.

Then above all feeling for others, all zest aroused by the sharpness of the crisis they had faced and passed, above the elation of success, a feeling, slight but growing with each day, throbbed and glowed in Page's heart, and grew with the mystic dawns and golden sunsets. Was it sympathetic glorying with a world newly come to life with its bourgeoning blossoms and languorous hours and sentient voices?

Page had been wrapped in bookish learning and absorbed in study. She was unversed in sentimental self-questioning, else she might have wondered why the orbit of her life had suddenly narrowed to her home; why no hauntings of her old ambitions troubled her; no thought of the friendships she had cemented visited her; why she was forgetful of Betty Carroll, and why Hugh Blakey was not thought of at all. She had not even noticed that they had heard no word from him since the governor

had carried him away, promising to "drop him at his wharf."

And this because in some pause of work, some going to and fro, came word or glance from a slender young man, whose thoughtful eyes held an intangible secret, whose speech and learning and intonation were a constant denial of his outward seeming. This contrast, which she had been quick to notice, and her father's constant speech of him first set her thoughts clustering about the man he praised; and, with sympathetic response to something controlled and yet compelling in the man himself, led her to the path of dreamland her girlhood had been too full of real things to allow.

Had she obtained one glimpse of the truth, no scorn would have been so keen as that which she would have poured upon herself; but there had come to Page that strange hour of life which comes to all, to the old — though they do not often so accredit it — as to the young, — they do not think, *they live.* When the strong influence of the hour is passed they look back and know it for what it was, — life so full, so irresistible in its flow, that there has been no questioning, no subtle torture of self.

So must have lived the primitive man; so we live, now and then. The level is not of the highest, but it somehow seems to hold a shadowy hint of what this existence might be for us but for the warfare of evil and necessity.

Page was only gladly aware of the day's sunshine. When her father joyfully announced, "Well, to-day's shipment finishes us up; I am going to pay off the hands to-night, and the schooner will take them to Baltimore to-morrow if they wish," she was jubilant.

Joy prevailed at the barracks also. With the careless irresponsibility of children, the "pickers" were only glad their work was done and they were free, with money in their pockets.

When the signal of a light flashed that evening from the library window they hurried to it. The new overseer marshalled them into some sort of order and stood close beneath the sill, watchful, managing. Page, inside, waited for them. The light on the big desk shone on piles of coins and bills and the steel of a pistol's barrel by their side; on Mr. Nottoway, standing by them, and his wife in the chair before the desk.

"Ready!" he called, and Page, leaning out, nodded to the young man, who gave one short command, "Tickets!"

The Italian, who headed the line, lifted up a red handkerchief loosely tied about an unassorted bundle.

"How many?" asked Page quickly.

"Seex hunda," and he watched with anxious eyes as they were counted, and the bills, crisp from the bank, were handed back to him. There was a V on two, and the other had the number 2 upon it, and he stood gloating over them until the manager's terse, "Next!" sent him out of line.

A woman, swarthy, blear-eyed, looked up into the young girl's face and held out her trembling hand. "Five hundred!"

The rattle of the money was quick, distinct. Page gave it into her hands.

A child stood next, a boy with big dark eyes and clear sunbrowned skin and hair tossed in black waves upon his forehead.

Page smiled as a red wave swept his cheek and his eyes glistened at the touch of his earnings.

"Next!" The woman was piteous; old and

sodden and bent, when she should have been young and strong and hopeful.

Page's heart sank when she looked at her, and she wondered how it could be possible that in God's fair creation one of his images should have lost all of life but its beastliness. But Page knew as little of crowded streets and loathsome rooms, of unloved infancy and unprotected childhood, and the final hell of unsexed womanhood towards which these tended, as the woman there knew of home and love and innocence.

The woman saw that the girl looked beautifully pure and fair, framed by the window, the lamplight shining on her face; and the exclamation she made when Page poured the money into the puffed and grimy hands was not impatience — it was the expression of a resentment, fleeting, unremembered, that to one should have been given so smooth a pathway, to the other nothing!

The young manager marshalled her away, and another took her place. He too had seen the pity in Page's face; and in his memory burned the picture she made, the tale her eyes told, of sympathy, of interest, as slowly, one by

one, the procession came before her under the window and melted away.

Page stood there looking into the dusk when they were gone. Some one down by the shore threw a drift log on the dying fire and the flame, blue and green, raced up against the dark. The boy began a song, a street song bare of music or poetry and of all except a catchy refrain; men and women joined in it as they moved this way and that, making ready to leave. The creaking of the schooner's sails as they were lifted to the night wind sounded sharply across the singing, and the snap of the desk lock as her father turned away.

Page followed, and as her figure faded from the window there stole from behind the clustering roses on the lawn a young man, straight and slender and firm of step; a bitter smile was on his lips, a ringing in his ears, as he turned towards that flotsam and jetsam of humanity sporting in their idle hour; a ringing of words, heard once, long forgotten and come again: "He went away into his own place!"

XVII

HIS own place! Was it not pleasant enough on that June night, a week later, when the stars shone on the breast of the brimming creek and the wind sighed in the rushes and the beat of the tide was in the air?

His room, the big low-ceilinged room in the barracks, where Page had been born, — though this he did not know, — was as clean as a hospital ward — the German woman had made it so — and as bare. The smoke-stained chimney mouth gaped wide, and the pine floor gleamed white in the lamplight; the narrow cot and the straight chair and the pine table emphasized the bareness.

Why should he then, when the men who had stayed on had long been asleep across the hall, walk restlessly up and down the floor, head bent, hands clenched? Why should he, when he neared the window, paused before the open sash, and leaned against the frame, look out

into the summer night with eyes which saw nothing of its dusky witchery? What visions formed before his eyes? Were they not beautiful, gracious, and beckoning? Was not he leading the ideal life of simple manhood, of work well done, of fresh air and cleanly living? Where were the contented mind and dreamless sleep which should have followed?

There was no answer in the soft breath of the night, no answer in the murmur of the waves, no answer in his heart.

XVIII

THE shimmer of the June sunshine was on land and water, and the languor of it was in Page's pulses as she leaned against the porch rail and in her father's humor as he turned the pages of his letter. The hiatus of restfulness between the rush of the spring and that of summer had come, and the household had set itself to the short period of idleness.

Mr. Nottoway opened his second letter and the young man at the porch steps seemed as unconcerned as his employer. The new overseer — such Mr. Nottoway would not have called him, but it was nearer to his duties than any other word could frame it — had ridden out early for the mail and now waited some word of conference; but there was neither hurry nor haste. Mr. Nottoway was reading his letters in lazy enjoyment when the ringing of the telephone called a testy exclamation from him. The eagerness of the spring for news over the wire was gone.

"Dear me, Page," he complained; "run in and answer it, will you?" He moved impatiently in his chair as the insistent whirring sounded an alien note to the morning's calm.

"Yes." Page had the receiver to her ear. "You have!" a note of sympathy in her clear, round voice. "I am so sorry to hear it! Have you been there all this time? O—h!" as she listened; "you are all right now? I am so glad! Did you say you wanted to speak to father? Wait a moment, I will call him! Father," her voice rang through the opened doors and windows, "it is Mr. Blakey," and she turned so quickly that she did not hear the protest coming over the line.

Mr. Nottoway was on his feet as soon as the name was spoken. He had begun to wonder what had become of the young man, to fear that he had selfishly allowed the rush of business to interfere with everything else, to blame himself for not having written, called him up, or communicated with him in some way. After all Blakey's aid, to have so forgotten him! He poured his apologies into the receiver.

Page sauntered back to the porch. Shirt waists and short skirts had marked her reign

in the kitchen, but she had slipped into finery and into idleness together.

The ruffles of her thin white gown swirled about her slippered feet as she leaned against the rail, and the laces on her bodice rose and fell with each light breath.

Below her at the step stood the new overseer, waiting. He looked steadily down at the green grass at his feet.

"What a beautiful day it is!" said Page lightly. The tension of silence seemed unbearable.

"Yes." The monosyllable was clear but lifeless.

The honeysuckle twined about the pillar by her side and hung its blossoms from the eaves, the clusters of the white, and the trumpets of the red. Page pulled at the blossoms nervously. "You are fond of flowers?" There was an effort in the speech, though she had meant it to be careless.

The young man made a movement of assent, but did not speak.

"You — you take beautiful care of the lawn," she blundered.

The flash in his eyes as he looked up at her startled her; she moved hastily, and the flowers

with which she had been filling her nervous fingers slipped to the ground.

The young man picked them up, came up the steps, and handed them to her. Her hands were tremulous as she took them and her finger-tips brushed his, work-hardened. The red flushed his forehead at the touch. He leaned towards her; his luminous gaze swept her face like a flame, his hard-drawn breath fanned her cheek as she, wide-eyed, startled, the coloring of the flowers in her face, her breath fluttering at the throat, stepped back — but she was smiling.

The man dug his finger nails into his hard palms as he turned away. At the step he looked back. The lace was trembling on her breast, and her unconscious eyes — God, he told himself, he could teach them anything. He leaned against the pillar and the green of the lawn rose and fell like the waves of the river before his vision. But he seemed only a man waiting patiently; so Mr. Nottoway thought him.

"Brown," he called as he hurried out, "I wish you would hitch up the carriage right away; I have to go into town. You had better

come along, Page; you have n't been in for an age. And Blakey says Mrs. Carroll is ill. He wants to know if you can't come and see her. He has been down in North Carolina putting through some lumber deal; did he tell you?" Blakey had made a short but pathetic tale of his delays and worries there, and Page was fully enlightened.

Mr. Nottoway hastened down the steps after the man, who was well on his way to the stables. "Don't change your dress," he called from the path; "I have no time to wait. Brown!" he overtook the overseer at the gate. "I wanted to ask you — I wanted to say," he began nervously, as he took off his hat and wiped the dampness from his forehead, "have you seen anybody about the place, lounging around, who did n't belong here?"

Brown listened with scant attention; his mind was awhirl with mad thoughts. "Whom do you mean?" he asked in a voice he strove to keep steady.

"Any — any negro?"

"Yes."

"When?" The abrupt question steadied the young man's attention instantly.

"Once or twice, late in the day, and once in the morning."

"Hm!" It was a long time before Mr. Nottoway said anything beyond the noncommittal exclamation. His hands grasped the topmost bar of the gate firmly, and his eyes, narrowed to a line of thoughtfulness, looked out upon road and field. But when he spoke again he went straight to the point.

"Do you know anything about the man who was here before you?" Brown assented shortly.

"How did you learn?"

"From the captain of the yacht which brought us down." Brown had made himself master of the facts in so skilful a manner that the captain scarcely knew he was being catechised.

"Do you know what he has been doing since you have been here?"

Brown made no answer, but he listened with an attention which demanded the rest of Mr. Nottoway's speech.

"Nothing; that's about the amount of it. He got a shanty not far from here and started out to be mighty independent, but it would n't work.

"The story got out, of course. There was no attempt at keeping it secret, and we would n't have succeeded if we had tried. As a result, not a man about here would give him a place. The negroes stood by him for a while and then they got tired of him. He used to be pretty influential with them, but now he is nothing. He has never in his life known what it was to have a hard time until now; and he is getting ugly over it. What sort of a fellow was that you saw lounging around?"

Brown could give no accurate description. He had once or twice seen a negro lurking about a fringe of cedars on a far-off field at dusk; that was all. He had paid very little attention to it.

Mr. Nottoway listened quietly and remained silent a long time after the man finished. "I don't know," spoken slowly. "It may be nonsense, but —" quickly and anxiously — "I am afraid he is up to mischief. You had better be careful, Brown. It seems impossible, but I would look out. I don't like it. I was afraid he would give me trouble before — with the hands, you know; but he never came near. Now — I just wish you would be careful," he

repeated. It never occurred to him to be careful of himself. "Be a little cautious," he added suddenly, as he turned and walked back to the house.

Page was coming down the steps. A big white hat, covered with a drift of feathers, shielded the radiance of her face. At sight of her her father's anxious thoughts took wing.

"Page," he cried, "ready? You beat us all! What are you going to do?" as she swept past him, a sparkle of merriment in her dark eyes answering the lazy teasing of his tone.

"I am going to cut some roses for Mrs. Carroll. Mother is fixing her a basket." The basket was Page's thought, but her mother's anxious fingers had taken it from her, and she had found an easier task.

"All right; get her a lot!" her father called as he hurried into the library, and Page, among the roses, cut and selected with a will.

The young man driving the horses to the door saw her trailing the ruffles of her gown across the grass, her head bent over the sheaf of roses in her arms. He sat straight in his seat, his eyes fixed on the pointed ears of his beasts; but he knew every movement, as she

laid the blossoms on the carriage seat, went up the steps, and came again, her father and mother by her side; he heard every syllable of her mother's anxious speech.

"Dear me, Page, it 's dreadful that Mrs. Carroll is sick! and you have n't seen her for such a long time. We have had time to think of no one but ourselves." Mrs. Nottoway's fair forehead wrinkled, but the furrows smoothed themselves out when she looked past her daughter and into her husband's eyes.

Brown stepped from the carriage and handed the reins to Mr. Nottoway, but he did not touch his cap. He stood, instead, straight, alert, his face an inscrutable mask.

"I hope you cut enough roses," Mrs. Nottoway exclaimed anxiously, as Page got into the carriage.

Her daughter lifted the sheaf into her lap.

"Oh! and you don't think she will mind my putting so much into the basket? I am almost afraid; but she is sick, and that jelly is delicious, and the cake is so good, and the ham of our own curing — be sure and tell her so; and that chicken was such a tender one!"

Page's laugh cut her mother's speech short.

"Anna," said Mr. Nottoway, "I am going to bring Blakey home with me."

"You are?"

His wife put her hand on the wheel and leaned forward, the jewels on her fingers flashing in the sunlight.

"Yes, to stay a day or two. He needs a holiday after the time he has had in those woods."

Mrs. Nottoway stepped back. She was mentally balancing the merits of broiled chicken and soft crabs and hot rolls for supper.

"Bring him right out with you," she called as her husband picked up the reins.

The young man stood waiting.

"Brown, did n't you say you would like to go into town?"

He assented.

"Is there anything special to keep you home to-day?"

"No." He added a few words as to what the men were doing.

"Then you had better go while you have the chance. Jump in!"

"I—I can walk."

"Nonsense! you ought to try it once to see! Get in!" He pulled the wheel around, the

young man jumped in and sat as motionless as a statue and as wordless.

Mr. Nottoway was buried in his own thoughts. That last check, warm in his pocket, received in that morning's mail, would square him with the world. He felt in anticipation the joy of handing it into the bank, of wiping the debt from his name, and seeing it stand clean and clear.

When next the bank handled his account the balance should be on the other side, he swore. He would take no such risks again. If his potatoes, yet to be harvested, and his melons were not successful beyond what they had ever been, there would be no college term for his daughter next winter. He wondered how she would take it. He turned to look at her, but the outlines of the slender figure against the dark curtains, the lightly clasped hands and red wilful mouth — he could see little more of her face, her hat shadowed it so deeply — looked serene enough. It was needless to talk of the matter until it should become imminent. He turned to his own thoughts.

When he was well into town he pulled up.

"Suppose you get out here and take a car. I will drive out for you."

Page swung herself lightly to the sidewalk and reached for her roses.

The young man sprang over the wheel on the other side.

"What are you going to do?" Mr. Nottoway asked him. He was plainly astonished.

Brown's voice was evenly expressionless as he answered, "I thought I could be of service to Miss Nottoway; the basket is heavy."

"It is that!" Mr. Nottoway chuckled as he recalled the contents and saw the size. "Can you find your way about?"

"No fear of that."

"Then meet me here" — they were in front of a corner drug-store — "in about two hours."

He had no time for further directions, the car was at the corner. The young man waited until Miss Nottoway was well inside, and then he followed. There were few people bound out to the suburb at this hour of the morning; the travel was the other way. The car, except for two or three passengers, was deserted as he came through to the front platform. Page herself was on the front seat.

There she felt alone. The gliding over smooth rails, the swift passing of houses,

fields, green marshes, and blue creeks was all for her.

The day was hot, and the air which swept through the car was like a heated current. No breath of coolness was in it, and here, away from the water, it was stifling. The face of the man who leaned over the motor was splotched with purple. He made some complaint of the heat and dizziness to the passenger on the platform, but the latter was watching with keen eyes the new country, the railways, steam and electric, which lay like the bars of a gridiron all over the land, and when he spoke of it, the motorman answered eagerly, —

"Yes, sir, I tell you a man has to keep his eyes open here. There 's been more than one accident on this line, bad ones too. Hot is n't it? and these clothes are awful!" He pushed back the heavy coat from his shoulders.

"Whew!" he said a moment later, "my head feels queer," and his hand shook on the controller as he turned it.

"There 's the Southern," he added as the shimmer of rails shone like silver lines across the way. "There 's a train due!" he added anxiously.

"Where 's the flagman?"

"Flagman! Land, we don't have any such luxuries!"

The electric way ran down into a hollow, up a bank, and straight across the track. They saw no sign of a locomotive around the sharp curve not far away, and the car ran on.

"I guess we can make it! Hello! Great God!" as a warning shriek tore the air. The man wrenched at the controller and brake; they slipped from his fingers and he went down at the motor's foot.

Page gave a great cry and threw herself to the floor. She heard the crash; the heavy jolt shook her from side to side. There were cries, grinding and rending, then one second's silence, and a sharp question, "Are you hurt?" The overseer lifted her to her feet, and down the rails the Southern slid from sight.

She steadied herself against the doorway. The fender, crumpled like a piece of paper, was thrown far out in the marsh, the wood before the motor was splintered; but as the motorman's hand had failed a man had reached over him, caught the controller and brake with superhuman grip, whirled them madly, and

brought the car jolting and reeling to a standstill, the fender on the locomotive's track.

She understood it in a breath, before the insistent question was repeated in her ear, "Are you hurt?"

"She is just scared!" The conductor's voice was as hysterical as a woman's.

The overseer looked at her keenly and helped her gently into a seat. "Do you mind waiting?" he asked, and his smile was like sunshine, "we must look after this man."

"He has had a sunstroke," the conductor declared as he leaned over him.

"Get him into the aisle where he can get the air. Where's the nearest doctor?" asked Brown.

The conductor named an office near the stables. "Lord only knows how we can get there," he added. "I don't know a thing about running the car."

Brown gripped the bar, and the broken, battered car moved smoothly forward. He looked back at the only passenger; and when he saw her white face and trembling lips he turned and watched his course. *That* way at least lay plain before him. Would God the unseen ways had stretched as straight!

XIX

"MISS NOTTOWAY!" Blakey hurried towards her up the board walk. "I had hoped you would come."

He was about to say that he had been looking for her, but he caught himself in time.

"Give me that basket!" He took it from her and opened the gate. "You have not been ill?" he stammered, as she passed him and lifted her head to thank him, and he caught sight of her white cheeks and darkly circled eyes.

"No." Page smiled faintly as she spoke. "Nothing worse than an adventure. They are thrilling to read of, but it is a little different from what you imagine to go through one. It seems frightfully real and commonplace and to be expected, and you don't know how frightened you have been until it is all over."

She talked quickly, hiding her agitation under a mask of words. "And you wonder why your nerves are tingling so," she added impatiently.

"What was it?" Blakey asked shortly.

Page told him as briefly as she could, looking away at the hot white street, and she did not note the paling cheek and clenched hands and quick breath as he listened.

"Where is he now — Brown?" he demanded as soon as she finished.

"In the car, taking it around the loop. There was no one at the stables, it was noon, and they must get the motorman to the doctor's office."

Blakey's hand shook as he put it on the door knob. "It's a pretty good thing he was there," he said, controlling himself with a strong effort. "You will find Mrs. Carroll inside. Try and see if there is anything you can do to comfort her," he begged earnestly, and closed the door behind him.

The house was closely shuttered, and Page stood bewildered in the dusky coolness. She heard no sound, and the sudden coming into the darkness, the hush of the house, struck to her excited fancy like a touch of disaster. She moved towards the sitting-room, and through it and the half-drawn curtain between the rooms she saw Nellie sitting in absolute stillness, her eyes watching, her attitude intent and listening;

but she had not called. The slat of one shutter was turned, and a ray of sunlight fell across the room and the table and the child in her high chair with a bowl of bread and milk before her. She had been eating listlessly, as if with no desire for the food.

She smiled ecstatically as she saw Page standing between the portières, the sheaf of roses in her arms.

"O—h!" she said, in a long, low, drawn-out cry.

Page leaned over her laughing softly, and slipped her arms around Nellie's neck, while the child cuddled back against the laces on her visitor's breast, with a delight at their softness and fineness, and looked up into the piquant face from which the strained look had fled at sight of her pleasure. Page's dark eyes glowed as she looked down at her, and the hint of color stole up beneath her fair skin.

"Where 's mamma?" she asked, as she put her hand under the child's round chin and tilted her face upwards.

Nellie nodded towards the kitchen. Page lifted her eyes and saw Betty Carroll standing motionless in the doorway, her fluffy hair

strained back from her forehead, tense lines of suffering about her mouth, and a hint of wildness in her eyes at which Page shuddered.

"I thought you were ill," she faltered. "Mr. Blakey told father so."

But the message had been that Mrs. Carroll was in great trouble. Mr. Nottoway, in his own lightheartedness, had translated it into the only trouble he could think of for the moment.

"I?" said Betty Carroll, in an even, deadened voice. "I? No, it is Tom."

"Where is he?" asked Page quickly.

"In Philadelphia."

"Oh!" Page ran towards her as she swayed in the doorway and put her arms about her. "And you and Nellie are here alone, worried — oh, I am so distressed! How have you stood it? Why didn't you let us know?" The tone of her voice was tenderness itself, but the woman never relaxed a muscle at her caress. Page was frightened by her stoniness.

"Sit down!" Page pushed her gently down into a rocking-chair and stood leaning against Nellie's chair, watching the child's mother. "What is the matter?"

"Typhoid." The wife's lips trembled as she answered, and Page bit back an exclamation of dismay.

The absolute despair in Betty Carroll's face cut to her heart. She could not look at it; she turned, and her fingers fumbled with the flowers. Suddenly she looked again at the desolate woman, lifted a cluster of the fragrant blossoms, and laid them in her lap. "I brought you some roses," she said softly.

"Roses!" The older woman caught them and crushed them to her and buried her face in them. "Oh!" she cried, as if some tension had snapped at their touch. "I can't bear it, I can't!"

"What is it?" Page slipped to her knees beside her as the hard sobs shook her from head to foot. "Don't, don't," she begged. "You will make yourself ill. Tell me what is the matter."

Betty Carroll lifted her head. "Don't you know?" she asked wonderingly; and Page was dumb. She felt the hot wave of shame sweeping her from head to foot. It was inexcusable, her conscience accused, that she should have shut herself up at home, kept herself apart, and

stayed away so long that she did not even know that she was needed.

Betty Carroll put her hands confusedly to her head. "You did not know that the company had failed?" she demanded.

Page made some murmur of sympathy, her pitiful eyes saying more than her tongue could speak.

"Let me tell you if I can. Bring a chair over here, Page. That company lasted two weeks, just two weeks after Tom put his money in it. It was all they ever had, I believe."

It was a brief tale which she told, perhaps a commonplace one; it was neither to the woman whose heart it was breaking. The company had gone through, as she said, and her husband's money had been lost with it. It was that which had bought the land and paid for the advertisements, and then the western man had suddenly grown wary. Things were at a deadlock; or worse, the venture was a failure.

Tom Carroll, with the small sum which he had saved for the expenses of the household until the company should be in good shape and able to pay his salary, had gone to Phila-

delphia. He had friends there, and he thought it would be easy to find a position: but the worry and anxiety had proved too great a strain; in a week he was in the hospital.

"One of the doctors has written to me," his wife finished. "He says Tom is doing well. I ought not to be such a coward—" her lip was tremulous as she spoke, "but here is the letter; read it."

"My dear Mrs. Carroll," the brief note ran, "I write to tell you about your husband. He is doing as well as might be expected from the nature of his illness, but he seems terribly worried about his family; in fact his mental condition is harder to combat than his physical. Can you not write to him brightly? Can you not, if it is necessary, arrange your affairs for the present without reference to him? Much depends on freeing him from anxiety and keeping him cheerful."

A signature followed and a postscript. "I will add that he had enough money on his person when taken ill to pay his expenses here."

Page drew a long breath when she finished. "This is hopeful," she ventured.

"Yes."

"Have you answered it?"

"Yes."

"What did you say?" Page insisted. She felt there was something yet which she had not touched, something she must get her fingers on and help if possible.

"Say?" with a bitter laugh. "I told him we were well, that the weather was beautiful, that Nellie's flowers were blooming, that it was warm enough for bathing — anything," she ended recklessly.

And what she had not told was that the money he had left with her was gone. She had paid for the little she had bought and paid the instalment due on their house, as he had told her; but the money her husband was to have sent her when hers should have been exhausted had not come and would not come. He knew it even in his delirium, and was crazed by a knowledge he was too ill to express.

The woman who lived a neighbor to those who had plenty and were carelessly certain that every one about them was well cared for faced a condition so impossible that she could not deal with it; she could only endure.

"Mrs. Carroll," asked Page, "is there no one who can stay with you, no friend?"

The woman's eyes flashed wildly. "No," she cried, "I want no one."

Page stood up and unfastened the big hat from her head. "I am going to stay to dinner," she announced. She did not see the startled look in Mrs. Carroll's eyes as she went out into the hall.

She lingered a moment, pulling herself together, putting aside her fright and anxiety, and getting under control the dismay this news struck home to her: this household needed the medicine of cheer. When she came in again her manner had the gay, careless touch which Betty Carroll knew.

"Here," she cried, "this is our dinner! We are not to have a thing more, and you are not to move," to Betty Carroll. "Mother sent this to the invalid. Nellie, leave that bread and milk alone! Not another mouthful! You are to eat chicken and jelly and cake. You will let her?" she begged. "It won't hurt her. Where are the plates?" She flung open the buffet door. "And here is bread." She put the cut loaf on the table. "Come on!"

Page made herself hostess with an air of bright assurance which was delightful. She told the first jest she could think of, stale as it was. She told of college spreads and pranks until Nellie bubbled with laughter and Betty Carroll, in spite of her darkly circled eyes, was smiling; and as she talked and ate and jested she watched them furtively. The kitchen, when she went into it, was bare, with a dusty look of disuse. Could it be possible, by any chance, that this woman and child, her loved friends, were hungry because there had not been sufficient food to satisfy their hunger?

The question kept her silent in the carriage as they rode homeward, Blakey by her side, and her father and the man who had that day saved her life before her. They thought her silence the result of her fright and humored it. It took her straight to her mother's side as soon as she reached home.

But her mother scouted the thought she suggested. It was impossible.

"What in the world are you thinking of, Page? Mrs. Carroll has no servant and her husband is away. Women never cook much for themselves, I can tell you," laughing at the

admission; "it is when a man is around that they make slaves of themselves. She is worried and has no appetite. No, indeed, I would n't even think of it." And so the fear was quieted.

XX

BLAKEY turned his head on his pillow. A delicious sense of well-being was in his pulses, a drowsy consciousness of strong salt air whispering about the chimney tops and rattling at the window shutters, of carolling birds, and faint summer perfumes. The sun shone in long slants, where the slats were turned, in transparent beams of light in which countless motes danced back and forth, and watching them his vision wandered to the strange furnishings of his room; he awoke to a knowledge of his surroundings as delightful as his dreamings. One was foreshadowing, the other reality. He drew a long breath of ease. The slow and sluggish current of his blood, debilitated by the hard life he had recently led and the fretfulness and chafing under its vexatious delays, had changed, and in its beat was the pulsation of returning vigor and the stir of expectancy.

He pushed up the window by his bedside, snapped down the slat and snapped it up again,

while he laughed to himself and the color stole into his face; then he softly turned and pillowed his head on his elbow and looked out on the sunlit lawn and on the slender figure beneath the trees.

The long shadows of the tree trunks lay across the white pathway, stretched their blackness over the sparkling grass, and wove sunshine and shadow about Page as she walked to and fro, her hands clasped behind her, her head held high, an eager look of expectancy on her bright face.

A gown of thin, light stuff dashed with darker hue clung about her slender form and swirled at her feet, the whiteness of it accentuating her fair face and the darkness of its furbishings bringing out strongly the rich blackness of her heavy hair, piled high upon her head, and the dark depths of her changeful eyes. No glimpse of morning sky, where the misty veil drawn from land and river trailed white wisps of feathery cloud across the sky; no sparkle of river, where the silvery pathway stretched westward; nor tossing dew-wet roses were half so sweet a vision to the watcher. Summer and sunshine, morn and its hopeful-

ness, the gods, as in the early days, had kneaded into one slender figure. He sated his eyes with her.

He watched the color steal up under the fair skin of her cheek and smiled as he wondered of what, of whom, she thought; he saw her sudden tense expectancy and heard a footstep on the ground, and uttered a sharp exclamation as Brown stepped from the shadow of the house.

Yet why should he? Page had spoken no word of gratitude yesterday. Betty Carroll's sorrow had driven all thought of herself away for the time being; but with the night, with that time which arraigns each hour of the day and sharply questions its misdeeds, had come the knowledge of a duty left undone. It was not an unpleasant one. It dogged no footsteps of sleep, but shone upon the dawn. Now that its fulfilment was come she joyed in it. How eager was her uplifted face, how quickly the words tripped over her lips, how her eyes changed at the expression of every sentence she spoke!

Blakey flung himself out of bed and across the room at the sudden mad thought which

shook him at sight of it. He called himself a dreaming idiot for the jealousy which shot through him.

It was impossible, the thing he had for one second feared. He told it to himself at the breakfast table, he repeated it when he came out on the porch, and the peacefulness to which he had awakened stole over him again. His eyes were as cloudless as the sky had become, his voice was as untroubled as the calm murmur of the waveless river shimmering beneath the morning sun, as he talked with his host.

"Have a cigar?" asked Mr. Nottoway. "I have smoked one, but—" He held out his match case to his visitor, lighted a second, and leaned back in his chair, blowing a wreath of smoke above his head. His eyes were narrowed to a line of dark across his fresh colored face as he talked of the weather, the crops, the new hands.

"Are you going to the springs this year?" asked Blakey abruptly, in one of the pauses of his broken monologue.

"No; I have an economical streak this year. What's the use of leaving this?" He made a

comprehensive sweep of his hand. "It seems to me this is about good enough for any one."

Blakey agreed enthusiastically.

"And I don't know," his host went on thoughtfully, as if the thought of one expenditure had suggested the other, "I don't know about Page."

"Miss Nottoway!" It was a sharp exclamation.

"She is planning for the Lord knows what — to go back to college to begin with." He laughed softly at the humor of the situation, which always appealed to him when his daughter talked of degrees. Had she been a boy, now, he could have understood. The school and university and the lawyer's degree would have followed as a matter of course, with a career which might lead through the ranks of county office to state office, to governorship, and end on any of the glittering islands washed by the troubled and miry sea of politics. But a slim girl with red mouth and dark eyes and black masses of silken hair, — there were other worlds for her to conquer; and he was not at all clear in his own mind as to which was the most worthy of subjection, the world

she had chosen or that he thought her fitted for. He had come, too, to watch for her, to listen for her step and the ring of her merry laugh, to delight in her independencies, her flirts of sauciness. He felt he could not bear to have her go again, to miss her sunshiny presence; he would give the half of his potato field if it would buy her contented stay.

Blakey turned his chair so that his face was in shadow. His nerves were tingling as if from an electric shock. With all his eager energy, his life had been more a succession of spasmodic impulses than any carefully thought out ambition. The governor's searching and scathing words had brought him face to face with himself, and had shown that the ideals which had at least glittered on his horizon had lowered year by year, till he was wellnigh ready to accept the levels of mere existence, and the desire of any high attainment grew less and less.

With the skill with which this had been shown, had, also, been pointed the way out. The politics of our country have grown to show more of the marsh and mire than of the hilltops, but the fire of statesmanship has not

died out; the strife, the constant matching of one's self against forces, and even yet, the insight into the future and the desire to perform one's highest duties, are still factors, as well as greed for gold and the lust of self-aggrandizement.

It was the higher ideal which allured Blakey. The appeal to it, and to the duties of his heredity, had been powerful; alone they would have been compelling, but they had come at an hour when other visions beckoned, and Blakey, according to his nature, saw only one thing at a time.

Again and again he had debated what he should say, what he should decide. Here — his hopefulness ran riot over the future, and the warnings of his common sense, that the good results of his work should be already near, if they were ever to be reached, grew faint and fainter; there — the very joy of the fight which would begin from the hour of his decision, if he followed the governor's plans, stirred his pulses.

If he had come to any decision so far he had not formulated it to himself. His real attitude was the holding of one thing in abeyance while he pursued the other, and Mr. Nottoway's words had set his thoughts awhirl.

"She seems happy enough," continued her father. "I don't see why she should wish to go away."

Should she go thought the young man, and there his thoughts stopped. That was a chasm across which his fancy threw no bridgeway, and slowly in the cells of purpose a determination began to form, to consolidate, the very thrill of which cut the breath short upon his lips.

"Where is Miss Nottoway?" he asked abruptly.

"I don't know, I saw her somewhere not long ago; she is in the kitchen with her mother, I expect." Where she was, an apron tied under her round chin, her sleeves tucked to her shoulders, beating a tipsy cake which Mrs. Nottoway was preparing for her guest.

"I saw her around early this morning, talking to Brown," said Mr. Nottoway. "That was a close shave yesterday. If it had n't been for him —" he bit hard on the cigar between his teeth.

"Blakey, where in the mischief did you pick him up anyway?"

"With all the rest. I got a man I had heard of to find the crew."

"Did you hear anything about him, anything especial?"

"Not a thing about him or any of the rest of them."

"I never had a man on my place like him. If I had two such my fortune would be made. But he knows too many things. I am afraid of him, that's the truth. There's a sort of feeling always as if you never know what will turn up next about him. Says he has been a car conductor; told me so last night." Mr. Nottoway paused; it was not necessary to repeat the earnest words he had said to him concerning his daughter.

"And somehow he let it slip that he had been on the bay dredging, shipped from Baltimore. I don't like it."

In a vivid flash the thought for which Blakey had berated himself shone again before him.

"Notice his English," went on the elder man again; "good as yours or mine; and the rest of that gang — I never did know what gibberish they were about."

He rose to his feet and flung away his cigar. "Well, I must look around." He had been from field to barn before sunrise, but it was

time for another round. "Make yourself at home. You will find some papers in the library and a magazine or two, if you care to read. All I want to do when I get a chance is to be lazy, genuinely lazy; I don't get a chance often." He laughed as he went off around the path to the stables, his hands stuck in his pockets, his hat tilted over his eyes.

Blakey, left to himself, was left to thoughts which stung. He wandered into the library, picked up a paper and threw it down, rang up his office and asked about affairs there; loitered out again, across the lawn, along the beach and the curving shore of the creek, until he neared the old house. He had never seen it so closely before, and he sauntered up the short path and looked carelessly in through the open windows.

"By George!" he exclaimed under his breath, as one glance showed him the littered untidy room on the one side of the hall and the spotless bareness of the other.

"By George!" he repeated, and whistled to himself as he rounded the corner. He came face to face with Page.

She, too, had been beset by a fancy to stroll by the old house and see — what?

"I thought — I came — I am looking for Mary," she stammered. "Perhaps she is in the old kitchen."

"I will wait until you see, if you will let me," said Blakey coldly.

Why was there such confusion in her speech? A throb of fierce feeling seemed to catch and shake at his heart; but he waited calmly and coldly, and calmly and coldly he watched, with that keen analysis of human nature which had stood him in stead every moment of his life. It aided him that day, the next, and the third; it brought him back to that same door, at night, when no light shone in the house but that which gleamed in the bare room where the window was opened wide and a man was bowed upon the sill.

He heard the step and raised his head. "Mr. Blakey?" he said slowly and interrogatively.

Blakey's hands were clenched into nervous fists in the pockets of his short coat. "Brown!" he answered, as if the meeting were a casual one; and yet he stood still.

"Will you come in?" the man at the window asked.

Blakey hesitated before he spoke. "Yes," he said shortly; and Brown, with a sudden fierce joy, heard his step on the worn threshold.

The snores of the sleepers across the hall ripped into the air as Blakey entered the room and closed the door behind him.

Brown pushed forward the chair by the window, but his visitor declined the hospitality with a gesture; he went over to the high mantelpiece, where the paint had been blistered by the heat of forgotten fires, and leaned against it. "You are getting along all right down here," he began tentatively. "Mr. Nottoway tells me you are of great service to him."

The listener did not speak. This was too clearly a prelude.

"You like it?" Blakey interrogated briefly.

"Yes," Brown admitted, with a long intonation of the monosyllable which might have been hesitancy, or slow reluctance, or both.

"As I brought you down here I feel responsible, you know." Blakey laughed shortly as he spoke. "Did you ever work at this sort of thing before?" he asked presently. "Mr. Nottoway says you told him you were new at it, but he declares that you picked it up

wonderfully. He is rather at sea about you altogether."

"It is n't the first time I have tried farming, but it is the first time I have tried this variety of it."

Blakey started slightly at the perfect phrasing and the clever avoidance of confidence. His keen eyes, now as black as thunderclouds and as ominous, searched the man's face, but the lamplight was feeble and half of the room between them. He turned his arm upon the mantel and looked down into the empty hearth.

This visit was not by chance. His instincts had divined and his training had shown him that of which he scarce allowed himself to think even as a possibility: this man's passion for the woman he himself loved, and her shy unconscious gliding into a sympathy with it which would need but a word to transform the dreaming into the reality of that strong devotion he knew her to be capable of. He had set all his ardent nature on the hope of awakening it for himself, but while he weighed and dreamed, this man, whom he classed among the lowest, whom he deemed to be of the level of those whom he had gathered from the slums — he

could not endure it! He could not countenance the thought of those two names in a breath.

There was but one thing to do now, to worm out of this interloper the secret of his identity, — for that there was a secret he was sure, — and then to rid the place of him. Page's fancy would swing back to its rightful balance when this was done; but not for himself. His hot jealousy spurned a glimmer of the thought. It was for her alone he acted; for, in his proud mind, such an alliance — nay! even such an attraction between the two — spelled disgrace.

He moved impatiently. The check he held upon himself was so strong he could not find words for speech. Never before had he needed such finesse, for now he must control himself if he would reach another.

"You expect to stay on?" he asked abruptly.

"Why do you wish to know?"

"I? Oh, I told you before; I consider myself responsible."

The sarcasm of his tone was keen. Brown felt it, and his attitude of waiting and defence dropped from him. "It is likely that I shall leave soon," he answered quietly.

"Why?" The question was like a shot, and Brown flushed hotly.

"It is no affair of yours to ask."

Blakey sprang towards him before the words were out. "I — I brought you here," he panted. "I 'll strangle the vile breath in your throat," as their swaying figures cast long shadows across the white pine floor.

"Mr. Blakey," Brown's passionless voice exclaimed, "take your hands off. God!" the anger running up into his voice and stifling it, "stop! listen to me!"

"Listen to you, you fool!" Blakey's hand was in the man's rough collar, and he shook him to and fro.

"Fool," blazed Brown; "the fool is yourself!"

Blakey rushed towards the wooden chair by the window, but the other was before him, snatched it up, and flung it into the blackness of the night.

"Listen to me," cried Brown hoarsely. "You have made beasts of us both."

Blakey's chest heaved and his right hand shot out; but Brown sprang aside. "Mr. Blakey," he began, his voice showing his self-

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
B L

mastery and calming his hearer, "there is something I must tell you."

Blakey was in the middle of the room. He whirled to face him. "Say it," he thundered.

"When I came here—"

"When I was fool enough to bring you. Would to God that I had thrown you overboard!"

"That might not have been so easy." He raised a hand against Blakey and pushed him aside as he spoke. "There has been enough of folly. I came here with no thought but to study my fellow-man—"

"You are something of a philosopher, Mr. Brown."

"My name is Van Horton." He watched Blakey keenly as he spoke, but the listener had grasped only one significance.

"You have dared to come here, when even your name is false," he blazed.

"I fancy many another man gave an assumed name that night on the governor's yacht."

Blakey was breathless with anger; his hands twitched at his sides.

"I am a philosopher, you say," Van Horton's cool, even voice continued; "perhaps I am

something more, a lover of my fellow-men." He did not heed Blakey's exclamation of disgust. "I have studied them in many places, in the mines of the Alleghanies, the grain-fields of the West, the orchards of California."

"An extensive knowledge! How did you gain it?"

"By looking for it."

"And imposing on others."

"I have imposed on no one. I have made my way by honest labor."

"Honest labor!" Blakey thundered. "Do you claim that as a merit? What else was there for you to do?"

"Much," answered the other without the change of an inflection; "much which I fear I have neglected."

"Then attend to it, in God's name. Go where you belong."

"I will."

"And never put your foot on this part of the earth again!"

The animosity faded from Van Horton's face as he caught the words; he turned to the window and looked out into the night. The creek brimmed full between the rushes, the

summer stars were mirrored on its breast, the winds sighed softly.

"Never," breathed a voice behind him.

He turned; his mouth was straight set, his eyes alight with sudden purpose. "I will tell you. I had vowed that I would tell no man, that I would leave as I had come, that I would be silent, although the days of my vow are ended." He pulled himself together as if, stern as his intention was, he could find no words to express it. "You know this place," he began slowly; "it is beautiful, it is a fortune. I am loath to boast, but — I could hold it so," he held out his hand with the palm outstretched. "It would be nothing, a bawble beside what I may lawfully claim."

"You are hiding from disgrace," cried Blakey.

"I have done nothing wrong. Can't you see? are you so dense? I am here because I want to be, because I wish to see for myself, to know the fight for daily subsistence."

"In a masquerade!" The scorn in Blakey's voice was untranslatable; it scorched like fire.

"It lacked but six weeks until the time should have ended," began Van Horton rapidly. "I was in Baltimore, I had been on a dredger,

— you know what that means, — I had been ill in the hospital. I had heard of this country and I wanted to see it for myself." He shot a piercing glance at Blakey as he ended.

"It is a lie, the whole story. I don't believe a word of it."

"You are a lawyer, look at these." He went over to the pine table where the small lamp burned, took a bundle of papers from his pocket, and laid them where the light shone full upon them.

Blakey seized them.

"I have carried them in case — I might have died, you know."

"And you didn't want to be buried like your fellow-man in spite of your love for him."

"No," heedless of the scorn; "there were those who would have the right to know. Are you convinced?" as Blakey flung them back again upon the table.

Dead silence. The crackling of the paper settling into its deep folds and the heavy breathing of the men alone broke it. He repeated the question.

"It is true," said Blakey straightening himself, and again there was silence.

"What will you do now?" the lawyer suddenly demanded; "now that your play is played out? Will you boast of your self-denial, blazon your knowledge?"—he silenced with a gesture the other's indignant denial—"turn on the lights? trumpet your discoveries?"

"I shall go home and live, remembering my fellow-men," Van Horton asserted proudly.

"Remember? They want to be forgotten. Who that is engulfed in misery wishes to be remembered by one encased in luxury. For I take it," scornfully, "that is what you expect to return to. No, by heaven, the one right they have is to be forgotten."

"They have been forgotten too long."

"What are you going to say here?" Blakey insisted, his merciless touch on the heart of the matter.

"Nothing."

Blakey strode a step nearer, his eyes blazed. "You are going away without a word?"

A spot of red burned on Van Horton's cheek and spread to neck and brow. He had not gauged the longing to go to Page and say, "You think me a laborer, lowly born; I can boast even beyond you. You are a dreamer;

the paths of your ambition I have already trod, and I left all to follow my dream. The gates of my castle are closed behind me," in such flowery language it might be put, "and I go in quest of the Holy Grail. It is no longer the wine-filled cup, precious as the liquor may be; it is the divine command beginning at last to be understood, 'love thy neighbor'; reach out to paths that are stormy and hard beset; live the life that is sick from poverty, temptation, disease; learn it by living it; ease the burden where it may be eased; pull aside the unnecessary thorns; let each soul — no matter how encased — know thy own soul is its brother. It is what the Master, with infinite love and infinite wisdom, did; it is what I, with finite capacity, humbly strive to do."

Ah! he could see her eyes kindle at such speech. What restraint he had put upon himself, what simple words he had dared; he had scarce allowed himself a look. Now to lift the burden with such words! The longing for utterance was beyond endurance.

"You do not mean a word of it," the impassioned voice broke upon his vision. "Why should you?"

The question beat back upon Blakey's own heart. Suddenly he saw all that the story might mean. His anguish at the thought was held in check, his numbed heart must be reckoned with afterwards, his will and his intellect alone were alive now. This man loved Page; with his wealth he could make her happy — a wave of hot anger swept over him. He looked in Van Horton's eyes with a stern questioning in his own, and Van Horton understood. Blakey saw his eyes gleam like the windows of a house in which the electric lights have been flashed, saw him lower his lids and look down at his sand-stained shoes.

"No," Van Horton said as if he spoke to his own heart; "no, I must not."

"I shall tell them myself."

"You shall not."

"I am under no bond of secrecy."

"You are hard."

"Have you been merciful?"

"I?" Van Horton put out his hand as though to shield himself from a blow.

Blakey made a motion as if to dismiss the subject, all of it; he walked unsteadily to the door. Van Horton sprang before him and

put his back against it. "Blakey," he asked impulsively, "is my name nothing to you? Your father was my father's friend."

Blakey looked at him, his sombre eyes dark and darker. "You are that man?" he said slowly, as if it passed belief, "*that* Van Horton?"

"Yes," a sudden hesitancy born of the admission on his face. "They were friends," he repeated, "good friends. Perhaps there may come a time, when you may know me better — I have not blamed you — you have misunderstood — as I might have done —" the words were broken and pleading; "I would like to feel that we might be friends sometime," he added simply.

"Mr. Van Horton," cried Blakey, his eyes flashing, "when a man is born outside of the state, spends his youth God knows how, and returns to it in the manner in which you have done, he must plead in other terms than that of ancestry to obtain recognition."

He wrenched open the door and was gone.

XXI

WHEN Mr. Nottoway came out on the lawn next morning the German was driving into the stable yard. The hour was early and the coolness of the night and dawn was yet in the air, but lines of lather marked the harness of the horse he drove. His employer was indignant. "What in the name of common sense have you been doing?" he demanded. "Where have you been at this hour?"

"Mr. Blakey, sir," the man excused himself; "he said it would be all right; he told me—here is the note he sent." He fumbled in his pocket and drew out a bit of folded paper. "He said it would be all right," he repeated, as he handed it to his employer.

The note contained few words; the two men understood each other too well for one to question if the other should hurriedly conclude he must go away. Still Mr. Nottoway stood dumbfounded.

"When did you start?" he asked quickly.

"Pretty early, sir."

"Did you know anything of this?"

Van Horton in the stable door was listening, astounded. "No," he said slowly, "I did not."

And what he did know he did not speak of. He knew that he had seen the unsteady reeling of Blakey's steps in the outer doorway, that he had followed him along the path under the apple trees, himself unseen, that he had waited on the porch and listened to the slow footsteps on the stairs.

But he did not know that long after his own eyes were shut in sleep Blakey had sat there by the window, where he had flung himself, motionless, benumbed, looking out into the night with eyes as sombre as the heavy shadows beneath the trees. He was looking into no future, he was conscious of the present with no analysis of it; he did not think, he felt. And when the dawn laid her first bar of crimson in the east, he got to his feet with a decision which was not resolve but instinct.

Van Horton understood; Blakey had gone and left the telling of the tale to him.

Should it be now? The German was fussing about the buggy, the cows were lowing in the

milking lot, and the horses whinnying in their stalls.

He went about his morning tasks and back to his home; his employer was on the porch, idle, ready to listen if he were asked, and his daughter was near him. Should he go boldly up the steps and sit down in that chair by her side, and, watching her face, tell her father? How her eyes would widen with wonder as he talked, how they would look at him, startled, questioning, as he had often seen them; and by and by when they understood, the color would come creeping into her cheek and the friendly smile to her lips! He stood irresolute, the courage stealing from his heart; for the first time in the days of danger, of illness, of work which had strained his strength till it grew to meet the need, his self-appointed sacrifice seemed to himself preposterous. He turned away, he would not seize the hour, it would come; but it did not.

The German brought the carriage to the door; Mr. Nottoway laughing into his wife's eyes, put her on the seat where she would be by his side, and Page's slim figure swayed against the curtain as they drove away.

Then the languor of sunshine and stillness settled upon Van Horton. The sun shone hot on the creek, the weeds whispered sibilant nameless fancies, the faint rustling of grass and shrub, the slow sailing of flecks of clouds, the very motion of the earth as she swung herself into summer and into the full tide of the year, set themselves to the music of a monotone such as few men hear, and in whose subtle strains of strange sweetness was entwined a temptation which was resistless.

What if at dusk of the eventide he should meet her, should linger instead of passing her by, should say the hot words burning in his heart? He rose and stretched out his arms, his longing was so fierce at the thought of it. He wandered under the old trees, by the deserted home, down the lawn to the beach; he flung himself face downward on the sand, propped his chin on his hand and watched the far-off tide and the skimming of the gulls; he listened to the murmur of the waves which ran past him, out to sea and the infinite. What songs they sang! — not of to-day, but of the things eternal. He had it, he knew it, he caught the word at last, — happiness! It was

the secret he had unconsciously sought in danger, in wandering; he had paid the price, and now he knew. He knew likewise what would make his happiness, and he would seize it!

The load of questioning, of perplexity, rolled away from him; he was as care free as a god. He stripped and swam in the creek; he wandered barefoot along the beach, the touch of the sand upon the soles of his feet was a joy; he lay down on the narrow cot in his room and slept as dreamlessly, with as light a breath and as easy a heart, as an infant; he had relapsed to the material.

The day crept to a close. He waited, impatience tingling at his nerves, and waited. Late into the evening he heard the roll of carriage wheels on the gravel, and, watching from the lawn, saw the shimmer of a white gown in the starlight and then from a window upstairs a ray of light pierce out into the darkness. The day was ended.

XXII

BEFORE sunrise of the next day he was at work in the potato field. The sun seemed to stand still in the heavens overhead, and the hot hours dragged as if they were interminable. The sight of the brown, fresh-turned earth, of the tubers rolling from the rich hills as they were opened up, the clean smell of the soil, the clamor of the crows, who, scenting the upturned soil, wheeled overhead, the crystal cloudless arch of the translucent blue, and the wandering breath of salt air which fanned his hot cheek might, on any other day, have been a joy of which he was part and parcel. To-day his work, leavened with impatience, was unendurable. The wild desire to seize the electric moment for which he longed, to tear it from the future, scorched in his veins; he was parched for a breath of it; it consumed him. That night should bring it, he swore, and he watched the lowering sun with an impatience which at last grew des-

perate and took no note of time until the crimson ball, dipping westward, told him his work was done.

The last ending arm of the creek thrust into the field not far away, where a thread of water ran down the sand when the tide was low and the bed brimmed full when it was high.

It was full now and cool and soothing and infinitely restful, when he stripped and plunged into it; the tinge of physical delight brought again a hint of the fancies of yesterday.

He went homeward with dreamy eyes which saw nothing about him,—no stretch of fields, no fringe of cedars, no dark figure lurking behind them. He sauntered slowly along the path behind the stables, towards the narrow yard before the house in which he lived, towards the cool bareness of his room. But he stayed there scarcely long enough for the simple meal with which the German woman served him. That she should do so had been the only stipulation he had made. He did not think it a fair condition of labor that the men who worked in the fields should get ready the food which gave them strength.

He was pursued by the spirit of restlessness

and keenly watchful, but he caught no glimpse of a straight slender figure on lawn or beach or pier or in any of the loitering places where Page was wont to be. The porch was deserted and her boat rocked at the wharf.

Page, with a delight which she had never outgrown in the evening barnyard scene, — the contented cattle in the milking lot, the horses whinnying in their stalls or loose before the stables, the clucking fowls, the peacefulness of a day which rounded about them and showed its restfulness when tools and workers were alike idle, — leaned her arms on the chestnut rails and watched the German woman at her tasks.

The worker talked volubly as the milk strained into her pails and the foam ran bubbling to the bright tin edges. Page answered as simply and unconcernedly as a child, until the milking was done, the bars to the stable yard were let down, and the woman had turned homeward; even then the girl still lingered. It was deliciously quiet, and the white road glimmered outward pale and ghostly. The fireflies flashed in the long grass which clothed the sides of the ditches, and in the clear yellow

west gleamed the new moon and the radiance of the evening star.

Page set her face towards it and loitered farther and farther away, the breath of the fresh fields against her cheek, the light of the west in her eyes. Her hands were clasped behind her as she walked, and a song was on her lips. The sound of it drowned the footsteps behind her.

She thought herself alone with the darkening sky, where the star-points shone, with the dusky fields, and the faint night sounds of cricket and frog and winds stealing through the growth of the land, when a voice spoke at her side. She wheeled to face the overseer.

He had searched for her everywhere, and had, at last, wandered out to the barn and seen the girlish figure in the dusk. He was utterly calm, now that this crucial moment had come. He bared his head and the wind played upon his thick hair; he said a courteous word of the air she had sung; he talked of song and poem as one who understood, until the startled look fled from the face of the young girl at his side and left wonder in its stead.

Then he courteously made his apologies for

having overtaken her. There was something he wished to tell before he went away. Yes, to the quick exclamation, he was going soon. He had said no word to her father, but it was necessary that he should leave. He had found a most interesting condition when he came, and he remained to do what he could towards straightening things out. Now that everything was working smoothly, he felt he could be spared; the German was competent to take his place, and would do so gladly.

His language and the betrayal of his train of thought set him farther apart than ever from his work and bewildered her. She did not know that she listened with paling cheek and tense strained look; but the man by her side watched every change of expression, all the stern steadiness of his face relaxing as he did so.

It was hard for him to find the first sentence of his strange story. He stumbled in his speech, repeated, pulled himself together, and began with the first glimmer of the fancy which had ruled him. He looked beyond her, into the western sky, where the yellow paled and the moon waxed golden and the star blazed a topaz,

as he spoke slowly, with no word of explanation or condemnation, telling a tale clearly — his life, the setting of it, his trend of thought, the gradual forming of his resolve, and the paths into which it had led him. But then he paused; his speech became broken. Her startled eyes, dark and wide, were what he had dreamed they would be; the curve of her mouth was wistful; her cheek paled and then the red flashed up into it and died again as she listened without word or exclamation to help him on in his story. He was not thinking now of how she looked or why she was silent, it was what she would say when he had told her all.

For he was going to do so, he was compelled by his own honor; but he meant to throw the burden of decision on her. He had thought until he was maddened, yet had reached no conclusion. This girl, fresh from her college life, guarded as convent days might have been, this girl with her unworldliness, her incapacity for even imagining the story he would tell her, he would force to pass judgment. With all his benevolence for the world at large, Van Horton could deal a thrust to the ones nearest him, whom he should have tenderly guarded, which

was but the more cruel because he dreamed that he saw with only kindly eyes.

There was a young woman, the incoherent sentences told, with whom he had grown up almost as intimately as with a sister. It was a thing prearranged — he never turned his head, but he saw the stiffening of Page's attitude, the proud tilt of her head — he did not know that any formal words had been spoken, but he did know how his own world had regarded it, how he had accepted it. His father had died before Van Horton left home, and he had begged her to come and comfort his mother. He got no further. Between his face and the white, cold one before him — ah! and stricken, too — rose another, gentle and fair and loving. His breath came in a long sigh; the hours of yesterday were æons away, and these were endless.

"I thought I loved her," he cried passionately, "that I had sounded every note of life, fool that I was! and that before I settled into the routine of life, which looked fair enough, God knows — But I have told you. I cannot go back to her, I cannot!"

His voice broke, and Page spoke for the first time. Her tone was proudly cold with the

effort to control a mad pain which stifled her, but of which she would not show even a trace. "Why have you told me this?"

"Why?" His face paled with anger. "You know," he asserted almost roughly.

"It is an interesting story. I thank you for telling it." Her voice shook with each word, yet they were quite distinct. She turned towards home.

"No, you are not going back." He faced her in the road. "I could have fought to the last drop of blood for this moment; you will listen."

But when she stood still, looking at him with steady eyes, not a word would come to his lips. He bent his head, and in that moment, when neither was aware of anything on earth or in heaven beyond themselves, a figure, which had bent and twisted and made its way across the fields and slipped into the deep ditch by the roadside, raised a sinister head and dropped down again into the blackness.

"If any one had told me that I — *I* — could so have relapsed into the elemental man, I would have sworn it impossible." His habit of self-analysis was so strong that he could say this at such a moment. "But —" he raised

his head and looked at her, his passionate gaze sweeping her from head to foot. "I could seize you, fight the world for you, and hide you in some spot secure from all. God! if it were possible, if that were all — to fight for you!"

He seized her clenched hands, unfastened them gently, and laid them on his breast, his own holding them there, though his strength overcame their reluctance and Page's breath came in a long gasp. "To be near you, to have you — you will forgive me all, now that I have told you? You will wait until I am free? I shall come again then." His voice deepened musically as he spoke. "I shall come for you; you will wait, Page?"

She had listened helplessly, every atom of her being vibrating in unison with his strange words while he spoke, until mastery of herself seemed swept from her; but in the silence in which he waited, her woman's instinct began slowly to assert itself.

"No," she said, as if to her own heart, and her voice was so low he bent his head above her to listen, "I must not."

His hands slipped from their hold of hers

and down about her, holding her close. "You will?" he pleaded.

Page's strength returned in full tide; she stepped back and his hands fell to his sides. "No," she said clearly, "you must go back — to her."

"I will not," he cried hotly. "You do not know what you are saying. I will not listen to you. Go to her *now!*"

"She has waited for you?" asked Page proudly.

Van Horton lowered his eyes; he could not look into hers, searching, pure, a little hard with the effort of self-control.

"She believed in you when you started on this mission?" It was the word he himself had used.

How she had believed and strengthened him in his purpose!

"And you would forget her?" that clear voice accused.

"No, never," he declared passionately. "I would explain."

"Ah," said Page slowly, "there are some things that cannot be explained." Her tone cut to his heart.

"But she would understand. I should tell her, tell her that I love you."

"Could you? Could you tell her *that!* No, it shall never be done. You will go home, Mr. Brown —"

Van Horton corrected her gently. "I thought I had told you my name," and he pronounced it.

The thought of disguise irritated her and aided her new composure.

"You will remember — this — these days here — as an episode in your adventures," she continued bravely. "I am glad to know it has been a pleasant one." She unclasped her hands and held out one to him. She did not see the red marks of her closely clenched fingers upon them; but he did.

"You will not send me away, you do not understand. I love you, you do not even dream how I love you!" He came close to her, a blaze of love and passion and pleading in his luminous eyes. "No one shall stand between us."

But Page looked back at him proudly. "Good-by," she repeated with a finality which could not be gainsaid, and this time her hand did not tremble when she placed it in his.

The gesture and the word meant an end to the subject and his dismissal. He understood, he accepted it; but for that time alone. He would come again, he vowed, while he stood watching her steps as she went down the dusky lawn. He saw nothing else, heard nothing, — no stealthy footsteps, no warning sound, — as a figure sprang from the ditch behind him, brought crashing down upon his head the club it held; then, with a shriek that tore through the darkness and pierced to the silence of the house, fled away into the night.

XXIII

IT was midnight. Van Horton lay unconscious on the narrow bed in his room. A physician from near by and one from the city watched by his side, and Mr. Nottoway waited by the window. The dwelling-house was ablaze with lights, and in her downstairs bedroom Mrs. Nottoway had thrown herself full-dressed across the bed for rest.

Page she thought asleep in the library. But the daughter only waited to be sure her mother was oblivious, and no one else was near, to begin the fight with herself which she had held at bay through the horror and confusion of that awful night. There was a package in his bosom which she had seized when she hung above Van Horton and found him not dead. She had said and done mad things in that fearful moment when she knelt beside him in the dark — the echo of that shriek still in the air and the rush of answering footsteps pounding in the lane. She saw the packet of letters which had fallen from his coat and lay in the

dust by his side, and she seized them then with the swift thought that they might contain some hint of the story he had told her. She had instantly resolved that she alone should hold the secret.

She stole to her mother's door and listened to her long-drawn breaths, and came back, her hand on the packet on her breast. The touch of it was as warm as it had been with his life warmth when her fingers first closed upon it. She sat down by the big table and drew the lamp nearer. Her fingers trembled on the rubber band about the worn papers as she slipped it from the letters, and the loosened pages shook in her hand as she turned them.

"Where are his people?" her mother had moaned. Some trace of them was here, Page knew. Should she search for the clew she feared to find? Should she send for them to whom he belonged, to whom he confessed allegiance even in that hour whose every word she now recalled — and recanted? As he lay there to live or die, was he theirs or hers? What right had any other to him? What duty was it of hers to see that others knew his danger? Should she play Providence?

She feared to look upon a written word. Should there be a clew so plain that none could mistake it, must she send? She turned the few worn envelopes, and the thing she dreaded was there, — a bit of cardboard and a pictured face. The breath stopped on her lips and her heart held its beat as she laid it down full in the circle of white light and leaned above it, gazing upon the tender eyes, the fluffy hair, and the look as of spirit shining through the flesh. She looked until her eyes were dimmed with tears, and turned impatiently to what remained. She felt another edge of thick cardboard and drew it out and laid it by the young face. An older woman was pictured there, with a wealth of white hair, luminous eyes, a sweet curve of mouth — and on the back an address.

She thrust them back between the few folded papers, snapped the band upon them, and buried her face upon her arms crossed on the table. Should she remain silent, recall in her heart the hard words she had spoken, claim him for life or death? And if it should be life? The physician gave neither hope nor its opposite. Should it be life, should she watch its coming back? Beside that advent — beside

the dawn of that happiness — what were any other claims?

The packet fell from her fingers as her imagination ran riot over the dream and hugged it close with such brilliant fancyings that she sighed softly and happily. The sound of the sigh broke the spell.

She faced the question steadfastly. One of the two things she must do. The telephone hung on the wall, the night clerk waited in the central office in the city, and from there the electric message would flash over the wire to his mother and to *her;* in five minutes it could be started on its way. She looked toward the black tube of the receiver fascinated; she stumbled to her feet, put out her hands as if feeling her way, and went out to the starlit night and the sounds of midnight.

Through what agonies of conflict she went, how far temptation shook her, was with herself alone. She was so new to suffering that it was a physical numbness. She was incapable of self-analysis; her temperament was active; she was not of that reflective nature which can find a sombre pleasure in tracing out the source and way of its sorrow.

Once she came into the house and went out again. The lights of the old house and those of the new streamed out into the night; the winds breathed softly around both and whispered among the trees and roses; and the dash of the tide was as loud as a human voice, and as insistent.

The pallid daybreak stole over the sky, while the worn-out watchers and the household slept, and the roseate hints of sunrise flushed the east. Page stood on the step watching it with a face as calm as the dawn and as glorious, when a mad whirring of the telephone called her. She put the receiver to her ear and listened, the color throbbing through her skin, a mist of tears in her eyes.

"Yes," she said when it was done, "I know. It is not Mr. Nottoway; it is I, Page." Her tongue stammered over the name. "*I telegraphed last night.*"

Beyond the midnight Blakey, standing in an enclosed box in the office of a small hotel more than half a hundred miles away and sending a casual message, had been told, "Oh, by the way, you know that man Mr. Nottoway

had down there — Brown? You brought him, did n't you? He was fairly murdered to-night. Some negro, I suppose — the man who was there before him. Things are pretty well stirred up down there about it."

Blakey had tried frantically again and again to make connection through, and had at last succeeded. With him there had been no question of duty; it was plain that the thing to do was to reveal his knowledge; but he closed the door of the box-like office behind him wearily.

Page had said that she knew; the story had been told. How had it been done? What did it mean to her? to him?

XXIV

"THINGS are pretty well stirred up out that way," the messenger had told Blakey.

Mr. Nottoway had been astounded by the clear directions of his daughter, her calm poise in the midst of confusion, her careful calculation of time and trains, and her conclusions as to the arrival of Van Horton's people, to meet whom he had driven into town. There he found that the sending of the necessary messages, the information imparted to the physicians, the quick facility with which news travels in a country where there is a network of electric communication, had spread the sensational story like wildfire.

Mr. Nottoway was a man who lived to himself and granted to others the same privilege; but the features of this affair were too highly colored for them not to be seized upon by the public. The part which Jesse had played

politically, the ugly story of his revenge upon his employer, the fact that he was missing from the shanty which he had recently called home, that he had been seen lurking about the farm — all were known; then again, the part that the young man had played, his birth, his education, his identity, which counted for much; no part of this was lost in the telling.

Naturally enough, the story got a twist in the hands of rumor which redounded to the credit of a popular man. Blakey, it was said, had found out the young man's secret with his lawyer shrewdness, and loyal to a request, had kept it until the news of the dreadful assault. His promptness in conveying the intelligence to Mr. Nottoway was duly dwelt upon; so Page was shielded. In her first attempt to explain to her father he had so understood her, and she had thankfully let it stand.

No anxious strangers were inquiring for Mr. Nottoway when he reached the station; no arrivals on any of the trains which thundered in were weary and white-faced and wild with fear. He waited an hour, two, until he was worn out with idle loitering, and then a clerk came to him with a telegram which filled three

blanks. Van Horton's mother and fiancée were in California.

They had read a printed description of a man who had been killed there whom they feared might be Van Horton, and they had gone to prove or disprove the horror in their hearts.

The two women had long lived in a passion of apprehension (though this, of course, the message did not state), and as the months went by, a year, two, the fear that he had perished among the unnamed became a thing they dared not breathe each to the other. No accident was chronicled which did not appall them until its last detail had been read.

The telegram gave the reason for the journey, told that a message to them had been already sent, and stated a time when they might be looked for. The day named was a week away.

Mr. Nottoway put the crushed papers in his pocket with a feeling of apprehension. There was enough turmoil already, and Van Horton was doing well; the doctor had assured him of it. There was no cause for all this talk and disturbance, and he distinctly disliked this public

handling of his affairs. The whole thing was better left alone.

But as he drove out of the city he was dismayed. About the street corners there, and in the suburbs, the excited voices and gestures, the silence when the men saw him, were ominous.

A mile from home he met the sheriff and his assistant, who reined in their horses to tell him of the search for Jesse. The country had been scoured, but unsuccessfully.

Mr. Nottoway gave his horses to the care of the German and went about the place with slow step and bent head. He seemed to be sauntering carelessly, but his keen glance searched every foot of ground which might be a hiding-place, — the thick rushes at the end of the creek, the myrtles by the shore. But the land was cleanly kept and used, every foot of it; there was scarcely room for a rabbit to have been concealed. It seemed impossible that the negro could have found a refuge so near, that he would dare to stay when his crime was done; but Mr. Nottoway was vigilant. Here was the only home Jesse had known in the county.

It was well into the night, and the clouds

blowing up from the east intensified the darkness, when he made a last round of the stables. The horses were dozing in their stalls and the cows, crowded in the far-off corner, were drawing long breaths of lazy satisfaction; his feet were noiseless as he went from door to door and at last into the big room of the barn. A ladder led to the loft where the hay was piled, and as he lingered he heard it sway. He crept back softly until he felt the wall behind him. The touch of his hand guided him towards the door and the faint square of light which shone there. He made his way carefully, as carefully as the negro who stole down the ladder. When he reached the door Mr. Nottoway bounded upon him. It was Jesse.

The negro made no resistance. His abject "Marse Not'way!" spoke all he felt — absolute terror.

"You black scoundrel, how dare you hide here, *here!* Do you know whether he is living or dead, the man you tried to murder, *murder?* Do you know?"

He shook the negro like a reed, and Jesse swayed in his hands as if there were neither bone nor muscle in his ragged clothing.

"I know," he cried; "dat's de reason I'm hyar. I come back dat night. If he 'd been daid I 'd be right down in de bottom o' dat ribbah."

The very thought seemed to paralyze him with fright. He huddled up against the door frame and Mr. Nottoway contemptuously shook him free of his grasp.

"What did you mean if you did not try to kill him?" he demanded sternly.

"Gawd only knows. I jes hated an' spised him."

"Because he stood for all you lacked, for what you have not one iota of, intelligence and honor." The speech was far beyond the comprehension of the negro, besotted as he was by terror; but Mr. Nottoway knew it for the heart of the matter, and he spoke it.

"He tuk my work," Jesse muttered sullenly.

"Your work! Get up, you fool!"

"What you gwine do, Marse Not'way? what you gwine do?" he cried wildly.

"I am going to take you into the city to jail, and you may thank your stars that it is night and no one will see you to know who you are, and that by morning you will be safely locked up."

The negro's eyes rolled up until the pupils were out of sight. "Gawd!" he muttered hoarsely, "Gawd!"

Mr. Nottoway in his furious anger had meant to terrify him, but he had struck deeper than he thought.

"Get up," he demanded as he stirred with his foot the heap on the doorstep.

Jesse sprang up and faced him. "You 'll nebbah get me dyah, nebbah!"

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Nottoway as he turned away. "I 'm not afraid of you. Go bring that horse out," pointing to the nearest stall, "and put him to the buggy."

"What for?" Jesse shrieked.

"I told you."

"I ain't gwine! I ain't gwine! Marse Not'-way, for Gawd's sake, you ain't gwine gib me up; I ain't huht you."

"No," the man blazed, "but you tried to ruin me."

The negro hung his head. "I allus did 'spect to come back."

"You thought I would allow you on my place after that!" Mr. Nottoway was so angry he could scarcely make himself understood.

"I thought you 'd been 'bleeged to," the negro muttered.

"And you thought that you held the control, *you*, and that you could bring me to your rascally terms! God! what a condition are we facing when we must pay for you to work, such as you, and truckle to your wishes!" His words choked in his throat. He turned towards the horses, but the negro sprang after him and caught him by the arm.

"Marse Not'way," he pleaded as the man shook off his touch, "dat man—he 's bettah; he ain't gwine to die. I 's heard 'em say so. He 'll be up, he 'll be free, an' I—shet me up? Keep me shet up? I 'll kill myself fus'."

"Pity you did n't try that first."

"Marse Not'way, you ain't gwine do it. You 's knowed me too long, you 's stood my frien' too often.

"Ef I jes had a chance," he whimpered, "one chance, ef I could git erway one time," Jesse pleaded, emboldened by the silence, "I 'd lib right. I allus did till dat one time. Ef I jes could git erway," he begged.

"Where to?" asked Mr. Nottoway sharply.

"Anywhars, anywhars, out o' dis. Marse

Not'way, you ain't gwine tak me to — dat place. You ain't gwine gib me up?"

Mr. Nottoway turned slowly towards the horses he had commanded Jesse to bring out of the stall. "Get the harness," he said shortly.

Jesse stumbled towards where he knew it hung and handled it with trembling fingers.

"Run out the buggy!" Jesse's knees shook and his teeth chattered as he obeyed, but some faint hope stirred in his abject, ignorant being.

"Whar's you gwine?" he pleaded when Mr. Nottoway sprang into the buggy and caught up the reins in his hands.

He had his answer late that night when a freight train rumbling across country was brought to a standstill by a bonfire on its track.

The night was pitchy dark, and the slight flames raced up and flared and fell in the gusty wind. The engineer sprang from his cab to face a man whom he knew and respected.

"There's a negro ahead," the man said, "whom I want you to get out of the county; he's hiding there," he pointed to a thicket the engineer knew was ahead and the direction of

which he could tell by the thrashing of the sassafras and sumach in the gale.

"Take him up in the cab with you; take him anywhere, so he is far enough away. It will be better for him and better for the county," he added grimly.

XXV

THE next day Page saw Herman Van Horton. She had hung about the old house, lived about it; it was the centre of household life. Her mother had not left it except for food and rest. The physicians' visits, the neighbors' inquiries, were made at its door.

When a sheaf of telegrams came that day, Van Horton had read them without a word of comment, only a slow flush on his face showed how the unpunctuated words, running one into the other, yet vivified by warmth and love, had touched him; but the determination he expressed as soon as the words were read electrified those about him — he was going home. He would go to-morrow, the physician would accompany him, and messages must be sent to his mother and — *them*, telling them where to meet him.

What was a broken head? It was not even so bad as that. The blow which had struck him unconscious, and kept him in that condition

so long that the worst was feared, had swerved, and the full force of it had fallen on his shoulders. The bruised flesh could be hidden and endured, the weakness could be controlled; he would get up that day. Nothing was left for those about him to do but yield.

His determination upheld him, and in an hour he was in a chair by the window. There he saw Page. For that one blessed moment he was alone, and he called her name softly and leaned against the sill looking down at her with eyes which said so much that words would have been futile. And she for the space of a breath was mindful only of the joy of seeing him. The color throbbed to her cheek and the radiance of delight shone in her face.

When he spoke at last it was in a whisper. He asked the question which had burned his brain since the first yellow envelope had touched his fingers. "Who told?" he questioned.

Page went as white as the whitewashed boards against which she leaned. "I," she answered swiftly.

"Does it mean the telling — the sending — all that it seems to mean? Page, is it good-by?"

"Good-by." The word was a whisper. For

her life Page could not have framed another; her fingers clutched the sill and her limbs shook as she leaned heavily against the house, but she seemed proudly silent, with lowered lids and lips that would not speak.

Van Horton sighed and turned his head away. She lifted her eyes to his averted face. If she should fail now, if she should lose all she had fought for — now, at last! She heard her mother talking cheerfully at the inner door. When he looked again she had vanished as noiselessly as a vivid picture might have slipped from the boards, and he beheld only the narrow yard, the fringe of lilacs, the rustling rushes, and the sheen of the creek.

When he saw her again he was pillowed in the carriage and the men and women of the place were clustered about him. He had turned his face homeward, and he was not unhappy. The ascetic strain of martyrdom, drawn from his Puritan mother, and the underlying and intertwining vein of romance, the heritage from the emigrant father, had prompted much of his life; they were already responding to his need and gilding the duties which lay before him. He would never, for long, be miserable

while he could crucify his own flesh — and the spirits of those who loved him.

To his vision, now, the ways which had been unseen ran straight and clear, a glint of light shining on the steel.

"Home!" It had been the cry of Blakey's heart. All the hours of that long night he had longed for his mother with a longing which had become unbearable. With the pale dawn he had risen to his feet to go to her; had caught the little steamer on her weekly trip up the long river, on whose banks stood the sleepy town in which he had been born; and he had hidden himself in his stateroom. At every wharf at which they stopped as the day wore on there would have been friendly faces and welcoming voices. He wanted but one face, one voice; that other for which he had longed he had put away, he believed forever.

He went up the grass-choked streets in the summer dusk to find her who still was left to him — his mother. He put his hand on the gate latch, outside of the tall box hedges shutting in the garden to its privacy, and shut behind him the world in which he had lived.

The pungent smell of the box and the heavy odor of summer lilies and of roses filled the dim twilight. Far in the heart of the garden loomed an arbor, honeysuckle covered.

As surely as if he were already gazing in her pale face he knew his mother sat there, her thin hands folded, her dark eyes sad with life-knowledge, dreaming the dreams of those women who, taking the brimming cup of life in hand and looking into it for the wine of love, find in its stead passion and weariness; of those who, sheltered, cared for materially, but starved to their soul, have yet no moan to make, no cry to the outside world, knowing that there is none in heaven or on earth to blame, that in the folly of their youth they thought a man to be great whom marriage proved to be only imposing.

But this mother heard her son's footstep, knew it, and came with shining face to the vine-wreathed door. "My son," she breathed, "my son!"

And if the dew which lay on his cheek as he lifted his head from her shoulder were not that which wet the rose, they were Godgiven, both of them.

XXVI

FOR a day or two no one noticed that Page lived like one benumbed. The storm of horror and fear and hope and excitement had swept over the house and left those within it downbeaten; but as one by one they swayed back to their normal living, only Page remained listless, lifeless. Her mother tried each trite remedy she knew.

"Mr. Nottoway," she asked, "is n't it almost time to be getting ready to go to the springs? Where are we going this year?"

"I have n't thought of it," her husband answered serenely.

"After all we have been through, I declare I believe I would like to get away myself; it would be a change."

"A change, Anna. Good Lord!" he groaned.

"I don't see why I should n't want it, you know I stay at home all the time," she persisted.

"I am going into town to-day. Do you want to go?"

"No, but I wish you would take Page." She spoke with a decisiveness which startled him. "She needs some new clothes. I want her to have one of those linen-colored organdies. It would bring out her coloring beautifully."

Mrs. Nottoway made a serious study of fashion magazines and the fashion sheet of the Sunday's paper with eye to her daughter's adornment. Her dressmaker selected her own clothes.

"Take her in to Waldon's and let her buy it and the laces and ribbons, and carry it right to Mrs. Martin. Where's that cut I put away the other day?" She fluttered the leaves of a book and the model of a gown dropped out.

But the suggestion struck no spark of life from her daughter. She tried another. She spoke of Betty Carroll with anxiety, and deplored the necessity which kept herself from visiting her; would Page go in her stead? The girl felt a sudden bound of something — not hope, but some desire of sympathy born of her desolation.

When she stood at last on Betty Carroll's porch and listened for an answer to her knock her sick despair was stifling. She pushed the

big hat from her forehead and looked with unseeing eyes across the hot street at the tall grasses and dusty cedars and wilted poplars. She listened impatiently for a sound of footsteps in the house, and then did not know that the door was opened and Betty Carroll stood framed in the shadow of the darkened hall, until she heard her name.

"Page!"

The girl turned with startled eyes.

"Come in," whispered her hostess. "Nellie is asleep."

She went noiselessly into the sitting-room and Page followed her. In the dusky house, where the blinds were closed to the glare and heat, it would have taken keen eyes to see the white cheeks and bloodless lips, but any ear attuned by love might have heard the dull level of despair to which Betty Carroll's will had sunk.

She was scrupulously courteous. She found her visitor a chair, took her hat, the drift of costly plumes striking up at her with their hint of luxury, handed her a fan, and sat down near her guest. In her mind was the maddening thought that she must begin to talk at once, to find something with which to entertain her

visitor, so that no observation of herself would be possible; and her racked brain was barren, her lips dumb. They sat silent with the tension of thoughts unexpressed and inexpressible in the air.

"How is Mr. Carroll?" Page asked lamely.

"Better."

"Oh, I am so glad to hear it," the girl said nervously. "You must feel better now, easier in your mind," she stumbled.

"Yes."

A faint breath of air rattled at the shutter and Page moved to catch the coolness on her forehead.

Betty Carroll sat straight in her chair, her hands clenched in her lap. She could feel the pulse of her blood from the soles of her feet to her finger-tips.

Page moved uneasily. It was as hard for her to find careless speech as for the older woman.

"I hope Mr. Blakey is well," she said at last, from total lack of any other words.

"I hope he is."

"Have n't you seen him?"

"Not since he went home with you."

"He was there only a day or two."

"He has gone home."

"Home!" Page's heart gave a suffocating throb and bounded madly. Was it across so many miles that his message had come? She had not thought him far away.

"Did n't you know?" her hostess was asking.

"No," she faltered.

"I don't see why." There was a note of irritation in Betty Carroll's voice. "He went straight from your house."

And then suddenly the pent-up agony in the older woman's heart flared into a flame of anger.

"I don't see why you should have treated him so, you might have had some pity for him. I suppose you never thought of any one but yourself, your mind is filled — Oh Page, I did not mean that — not as it sounds —"

Page pushed her away as she leaned towards her. "I do not know what you mean," she cried passionately.

"Hugh would never have gone off this way unless —" The significance of her tone suggested the rest.

"I see. I know now what you mean." The scorn rang in Page's voice. "He never thought

of such a thing." But there came suddenly the memory of that June evening and of half-framed fancies which had drifted from her, so slight had they been.

"I dare say you did not." The older woman cared too little for anything in the world to be impassioned about it.

"Nor he!" flashed Page.

"He did, and you know it." Betty Carroll was holding too many thoughts in check to control this one.

"Mrs. Carroll, I had better go." Page's face was as white as her gown. "I must meet father in town. I am glad to hear that Mr. Carroll is improving," she added with cold politeness, though her fingers trembled so that she could not thrust her hat pins through her hat; but she fastened it firmly and went to the door. "Good-by!"

"No, no!" Betty Carroll sprang to her feet and caught the girl in her arms. "You are not going. What have I said? I am fairly crazed. I do not know what I am doing." Her arms fell to her sides and her hopeless eyes stared vacantly beyond Page. "God only knows what I have been through in this

house, alone with Nellie. I have had to keep it back, to hold myself in check, for her. I have not dared to say one word, to make one moan, for fear she should hear. If she should, if she questioned me, I could not bear it; not that, not that, if she knew."

The tears were stealing down Page's cheek, but Betty Carroll never heeded her exclamation or broken words.

"All day, all night," went on the hopeless monotone. "So many days and nights—alone!"

"Where are your neighbors?"

"Neighbors." She merely repeated the word, but the tone was enough. She was not a woman for intimacies, and those about her were. That or nothing she must choose; she preferred nothing.

"Hugh was our only neighbor," she put her hand to her forehead, her breath came quick and short in her effort for self-control, "and you," her lips twitching, "have sent him away."

"I did not, I did not."

Betty Carroll leaned against the door frame and looked at her wonderingly. "Page," she asked slowly, "do you know no better?"

"It was you who told me," accused the girl, "warned me that — that his fancy wandered to every strange face," she finished lamely, not daring to utter one of the hot words in her thoughts.

"But did n't you know the difference?"

"How could I?" she fenced.

So Hugh, hot-headed, proud, and impulsive, had seen and gone away without a word. Betty Carroll thought she understood, and smiled wanly. "Sit down, Page. I have been outrageous I know, but," with a long breath, "I feel better for it. You will forgive me," she pleaded wearily, as she leaned back in her chair.

In a flash Page was at her feet, her face hidden in her lap. "I am so wretched," she sobbed, "so wretchedly unhappy."

It would be long before Betty Carroll could forgive her for Hugh. "Why?" she asked coldly.

"I do not know."

"No one who does not know why has the right to be unhappy," came the stern answer.

Page slipped her arms from Betty Carroll's lap and sat, her hand on her knee, gazing before her with tear-blurred eyes.

But the older woman looking at her went on: "Well clothed, well fed — do you know," she asked wildly, "it is something to be well fed? You talk of wretchedness, *you*," the girl shrank at her feet; "it is rank ingratitude. What have you? Everything the world can give you! What would your father say to hear you? your mother? You go home to plenty. You do not know the meaning of denial, and yet you, *you* talk of wretchedness. Wretchedness, misery, sorrow; you do not know the first syllable of them, the first letter." She sprang to her feet. "Do you want to learn? They mean neither breaking hearts nor ending lives, *but the tragedy of daily bread.*

"Look!" She swept through the room and threw open the buffet door; save for dishes it was empty. "That is tragedy! My God, I have told!"

Page sprang to her feet and ran to where Betty Carroll swayed, her hands before her eyes, and caught her around the waist; the girl's eyes were blazing. "Come upstairs with me," she commanded.

The woman stood stock-still. "Tom does not know, Tom does not know," she whispered.

"Come!"

She followed without a word.

"Put on a street dress."

Betty's will, weakened by its long battle and by excitement, offered no resistance; she put her hand to her collar and loosened it.

"Where are your clothes?"

She told briefly.

"And Nellie's?"

They were pointed out.

"And your trunk?"

She showed it.

"Now dress!"

In a fever of anguished impatience Page thrust the clothes into the trunk, locked it, and wakened the child and dressed her.

She saw through the opened door that Betty Carroll was ready. "Go lock up your house," she commanded.

Then Betty asked the first question.

"What for?"

"I am going to take you home, home with me."

"I cannot go."

Nellie's big eyes were watching her gravely.

"For her sake." Page's lips framed the words over the child's head.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

There was a rattle of carriage wheels outside and a call. Page ran down the steps. Her father turned to face her with some careless words on his lips. Her eyes scorched into his as he leaned forward.

"Mrs. Carroll is going home with us."

He sat dumb.

"And Nellie. Come upstairs and help me with their trunk."

And he went.

Three days later a man lay on his bed in the city hospital. His waxen fingers held a letter, two letters, one of loving words, and the other — the full cheerful tone of it, the deep friendliness — warmed the thin current of his blood. The anguish which had induced illness and kept it saw its first abatement; in his sunken eyes was a gleam of peace, and in his heart a stir of hope.

XXVII

IT was those waxen fingers grown firmer and more life-like which wrote six weeks later, "I am coming home! I shall be there in a week!" and at the end, like words which have been kept for a triumphant strain, "I have a position," he told its nature, "Blakey got it for me, God bless him!"

Betty Carroll kept his letter within touch of her hand, as he had kept hers. There was still a mist between her and Page as she looked towards the girl sitting near her on the porch step, though the letter had been read an hour ago.

Mr. Nottoway knew its joyful news and his wife knew; they were talking of it on the lawn, where he followed her from flower to flower in her anxious care of them. Nellie knew it as she builded towering castles in the sand; the winds whispered it, the birds sang it — home and husband and daily bread. Our commonplaces, uncounted while securely ours,

restored when we think them lost, make heaven, Betty Carroll knew. That home is more than the housing and living, a deeper thing than the absorbing question of clothes and food and furnishings, she had learned; she had found the primal depths of happiness, and the foam and fret of the surface could never more trouble her.

It was of Hugh Blakey's kindness which had brought this joy into the lives of those dear to her that Page was thinking. She had never been allowed to forget. Betty Carroll was too warm a friend of his to permit it, though she had played her part unconsciously.

She had never again alluded to the accusation she had made so hotly against Page, but a hundred tales of Blakey's thoughtfulness, his impulsive acts of kindness, and his speech were always on her lips.

Page lived in an atmosphere of remembrance. She heard of him as all their world now heard, through the press, through gossip; from himself she heard nothing.

He had accepted the governor's proposition and was making a fight which stirred the district to its farthest limits; but this was newspaper talk.

Boardman's work had been done better than any man imagined, until Blakey's fingers were on the county's pulse; then he saw. If ever he needed eloquence he needed it now; if ever his enthusiasm had served him it must serve him now; if ever he had any magnetic, personal influence in his intercourse with his fellow-men it must aid him for the undoing of Boardman's steady work — if such undoing were possible.

The rank and file of the party, indifferently looked after and held together only by a sense of loyalty, could not be relied upon to withstand the promises and cajoleries of a worker who was skilful enough to hide his ability as a politician under the guise of a plain and practical farmer.

Blakey was dismayed at the gravity of the situation; but he thrived upon his fight with it. To be ready with a ringing speech whenever the chance offered, to eat a meal when it could be eaten, and find a night's sleep where a bed could be had, left no time for thoughts of himself.

The drives along those country roads were not filled with self-reflection, but with thoughts

of the men he had seen and the one he was about to see. With all the force of his strong will every other idea was put away from him.

The necessity of such action was all he thought of; he did not know its wisdom. For there is no such wholesome fashion of dealing with heartbreaking perplexities as throwing one's self, body and soul, into the duty which is nearest. The release of the mind, so given, clarifies it. The perplexity shows, when the mind is free to take it up again, its easiest point of disentanglement; nay, it may show that it is but a softly heaped mesh needing only a skilful handling.

The echo of this political strife had reached Mr. Nottoway's household. He reported every word he heard of it and read aloud every paragraph he came upon relating to it. Page, listening, weighing, told herself with angry self-disdain that no thought of her had ever disturbed this hero's consciousness; it was but an imagination of Betty Carroll; the whole heart of the man was in his ambitions. Yet he had not forgotten his friends. She thrilled at the remembrance.

If it had not been for Betty Carroll in those weeks, Page would have sunken into fretful self-examination; but if she had saved the older woman from despair and from another danger she did not name even to herself, her thoughtful love for her guest and the constant surrounding of her with pleasure saved herself from morbid self-analysis. Betty Carroll's stinging words were forever in her memory; she dared not be unhappy. Instead she set herself to the healthy task of helpfulness. There were no repinings, no questionings, no midnight vigils; and the sorrow bravely borne deepened the sweetness of a fine strong nature which had been too carelessly happy for its best development.

The two women and Nellie might drive without fear along the level roads by fields now fallow; or further inland, by great corn lands where the yellowed tassels and sered leaves rustled in the air; or under the pungent pines and through thick woods where the big oaks grew, with resinous gums, and green poplars, hiding the ghosts of orange-hued cups under their shining leafage; or further yet, where the fields ran to yellow sedge and the partridge whirred from the roadside and the

rabbit flicked the white which betrayed him amongst the wayside ferns.

It was an absolutely idle season on the farm. Every year since Page could remember they had spent their holiday at seaside or mountain resort or travelling; but now they had a guest and they were satisfied — Page was more. In spite of her blitheness there were some scars to heal, and a crowded resort was not the place for the healing; some ills to be cured by the salve of sturdy resistance, not by feverish forgetfulness.

Mr. Nottoway was as carefree as the day as he followed his wife. "I would n't break that geranium, Anna," he urged as she pulled off the spreading branches.

"It 's spreading too far."

"Let it; it 's a shame to pull at it so."

"Don't you prune your plants?"

"That is to make them bear."

"This is to make this bloom." She laughed the happy laugh of a woman who has had no anguish to creep into her inflections.

"Oh! Have your way, you always do!"

She threw her head back and looked up at him. He leaned nearer.

"Anna, your eyes are as blue —" he looked up at the sky and back again and shook his head, "bluer!" he said, as if despairing of comparison.

His wife straightened herself from her leaning position over the flowers. He caught her hand to help her and kissed it swiftly in the palm. She flushed pink as the geranium blossoms.

"Oh, they can't see us!" he assured her whimsically, and he slipped her hand on his arm, his dark eyes narrowed to a line of laughter under his soft hat. His thick silver hair gleamed in the light.

"I am going up to Bowling Green, next week," he announced lazily; "don't you want to go?"

"I can't," with some household reason quickly given. "Take Page with you; she has n't been from home this summer."

"Good Lord! as if she ever did anything but go from home!"

"I don't see why you can't take her," she insisted.

"Neither do I," he teased.

"Then you will?"

"Who will stay with you?"

"Mrs. Carroll."

"But she might not like it if Page went."

"Come, I'll ask her."

"Oh, don't hurry so!"

But she did; she marched him straight up to the porch steps. "Page," she called, "your father is going to Bowling Green next week."

Page's face was bright with interest as she leaned forward and listened.

"Don't you want to go?"

Page had no wish to go anywhere, but she did not say so. "Must I go with father and leave you?" she teased.

Betty Carroll listened eagerly; her own happiness made her anxious for that of others, and Bowling Green was the centre of the fight Blakey was waging. Page might meet him there. Mr. Nottoway planned it quickly. They would go up next week for court day, see many of his old friends, and hear one of Blakey's speeches; though he gave none of these for reasons.

He did not know that just at this phase of the fight Blakey's chief aid, the man who held in hand the party's affairs in the county,

the young judge, had failed him. It was this partnership which the political leaders in Richmond had relied on; and the two had worked shoulder to shoulder, strength to strength. Blakey's brilliancy and the judge's quiet logic, Blakey's flow of words and Maynard's incisive sarcasm, had done more than had been hoped for; then, within a day, the judge went to pieces like a house of cards.

Blakey, waiting to meet him at the country town where they were both to speak, heard that Maynard was at home, dead drunk. He did his best, but the heart was out of it, the ring of enthusiasm was gone; his impulsive nature had responded too quickly to this calamity.

The crowd felt it, and Blakey drove away, the chill of disaster in the air; and it stayed.

He could do nothing to influence Maynard; his own efforts grew more and more machine like; things went worse and worse, and he wrote to Richmond.

XXVIII

"THE Lord in heaven knows that if I were a man no woman should ruin my life for me. If I were one for but one year to show — do you think I would let a face like yours come between me and my future?" Mrs. Warner's voice trembled with anger and the letter she held shook in her hands.

"To see a man, a splendid man, allow his life to be ruined by such as you! I don't care, sit still, you shall not go away, you *shall not!* you are in my house. You shall hear sense for once. You have never heard it in all your life. It can't be," she went on bitterly, "what he sees in you, it must be what he thinks of you. Yes, that is it, I know, his own goodness. I have no patience with him for being such a f— such an idiot!"

"You will be so kind as to tell me what you are talking about." Marian stood still where her aunt had stopped her, in the middle of the library floor.

"As if you did not know it, know it, glory in it!" in breathless anger.

Marian's face was white, but she was icily polite.

"Know what?" she demanded.

"That Robert Maynard is on a drunken spree, shut up in that house of his off in the country, and will not let a soul come near him; you know, you have heard! You know how he has fought it, this inheritance; his father died a drunkard, his grandfather. He swore it should stop there!" She bit her lip and her eyes flashed at her niece. "He has not touched a drop of liquor for ten years. You know what he has made of himself in that time, — the most honored man, the most intelligent! And he met you here, *here!*"

"You say he is ill?" Marian stood rigid, her hands clenched at her sides.

"He is, and that is not all. Just now, when he is in a blaze of scrutiny, you thought it a fit time to announce your engagement."

"It is not announced."

"It was in the papers a week ago. Here!" She flung the letter on the table by her side and leaned over it, fumbling among the magazines

and papers there. "Here!" as she pulled out a sheet and held it before her niece, "do you mean to tell me you know nothing of this, and this?"

A blurred photograph following the outlines of Marian's face was on the page, and under it in bold type was the announcement of her engagement and the probable date of the wedding.

She could not have grown whiter than she was, but her lips straightened into a red line. Still she answered clearly:

"I know nothing of it."

"Then it is not true, it is not true, Marian?" Mrs. Warner drew a long breath, her voice softened. Had she misjudged her?

"It is true."

"And you are engaged?"

"I am."

"To that man from Atlanta?" Question and answer had been breathless.

"Yes."

Mrs. Warner threw her hands apart as she came closer to her.

"And you wrote to Robert Maynard?"

Her face almost touched her niece's. She saw

the answer in Marian's eyes. "And told him?" The girl nodded an assent. She was compelled to answer, and she could not speak.

"God knows what you are made of! It is such as you who mock us, shame womanhood. Your play had lasted long enough with Robert Maynard. This man is young, rich. What does he know of you? Tell him to expect nothing, tell him if he does, if he thinks—" she moved away, wringing her hands.

Marian walked slowly to the door. Her face was inscrutable, her manner calmly critical. "Aunt Emma," she said, her clear voice sounding through the room, "you will be here for ten minutes?"

"Yes."

"You will wait here?"

Mrs. Warner made an impatient gesture of assent as the door closed behind the young girl. She put her glasses to her eyes and picked up the judge's letter again. He was in Richmond. He had told her of Robert Maynard, and had added that he was not only ruining himself but Hugh Blakey's chances and the party's in that district, and that such disaffection among a loyal people would tell most seriously through-

out all the counties. He had stated facts, and the keen woman had traced between them, touching this and that, until the disaster grew appalling, — a woman's influence, and that woman her niece.

She had known Marian to be heartless, but she had never believed her capable of anything as insufferable as this. That the girl had cut into Mrs. Warner's life through her husband's affairs was unforgivable. She turned from the window at Marian's quick step in the hall.

Her niece stood in the doorway, her hat on, her firm fingers buttoning her gloves. "I am going," she announced briefly.

"Perhaps it is as well."

"Will you go with me?"

"I? you want me to take you to your father, my brother, and tell him this story?"

"I am not going home." This with a faint smile on the girl's red lips.

Her aunt stared at her speechless.

"I am going to Robert Maynard." Marian never looked toward her aunt, but spoke as carelessly as if it were an announcement of a morning's walk, and crossed the room to fasten her veil about the brim of her hat, watching

her reflection in the large mahogany framed mirror above the mantelpiece.

She turned when it was adjusted to her liking. "Ike is waiting with the canoe, the boat is about due; will you come?"

"No; neither shall you."

Marian did not hasten her step, but she walked quietly away.

"You shall not go!" her aunt called stormily.

She turned then. "Nothing on earth shall stop me. Will you come?"

Her aunt broke down. "Marian, you must not, you cannot. What will people say?"

"What are they already saying of him?"

"But he," weakly, "is a man."

"And I a *woman*, in spite of all you said." The voice was softened, and the quizzical smile unchanged. "There's the boat at the lower wharf. We have just time; will you go? Get your hat. I have my purse and what we shall need."

"Wait, wait, for mercy's sake!" Mrs. Warner wailed. Oh, if the judge were only here! If there were some one here beside that miserable girl and herself!

She ran into the kitchen. "We are going

to cousin Tom's, Kate, quite hurriedly,"—her panting told that; "we shall be back in a day or two."

She raced up the stairs, her knees trembling under her, for she was used to quiet and dignified motion. She seized her hat and gloves, the vision of Marian in the canoe, and of Ike, the sail's rope in his hands, and of the big white steamer gliding nearer and nearer, shining through the open window. She ran across the lawn, hot and angry and thoroughly discomfited, and stumbled into the boat by the side of Marian, who sat placidly unmoved.

The man shook out the sail, and when the first great wave from the steamer tossed their boat, Mrs. Warner was climbing onto the wharf.

On the steamer Marian was calmly, icily unapproachable. The judge's wife knew every officer, every passenger. She was volubly polite where she was accustomed to doing whatever her kind heart prompted and leaving people to think as they pleased. To-day she was conciliating, striving to concentrate attention on herself. She was brilliant, she was astonished at herself. She had been so long complacent

that she had grown rusty. The effort to please was exhilarating but trying. Her life had been so doubly intertwined with her husband's that she had acquired something of his terseness, his bluntness. "I would rather take a dancing bear around," she told herself, "than a beauty."

When they changed steamers affability must be practised anew; when they settled into their seats on the train, she gave a groan of relief, — there was no one in sight whom they knew; but when they got off at the dreary crossroad station and went into the empty shed of a ticket office she faced the most exasperating moment of the journey. She was dust begrimed and hot, and Marian, with her peachy bloom and golden hair waved under her veil, and calm, black eyes, was a contrast it angered her to look upon. But she was very suave.

"Can I get a carriage here?" she asked the man.

The agent, gazing past her to the young woman outside the door, was wellnigh speechless. "No 'm," he drawled.

"I've got to have one." The judge's wife brought her foot down a trifle impatiently.

The agent seemed unmoved.

She changed her tactics once more. "Have n't you a vehicle of your own?" she asked seductively.

"A buggy." He spoke as if nothing on earth mattered less.

"Could n't we have that?"

"How are you going to get it back?"

"Oh! I will attend to that. I am going to my cousin's, Mr. Tom Chandler."

Marian, outside the door, turned quickly at the last words, but her aunt did not notice. It was the first good look at the beauty the agent had enjoyed.

"I 'll take you myself," he drawled, "if you don't mind crowding," and he grinned at the last words.

"Oh no; not at all," the judge's wife assured him; but the agent took care that when they drove away Marian should sit in the middle. She might have been anywhere, floating in the air, for all the notice she took of him, or any one else, even when cousin Tom's was reached.

"How far is it?" she asked as soon as she and her aunt were alone in the guest room.

"Two miles." It was useless for Mrs. Warner to pretend she did not understand.

"Are you going with me?"

"You are not going tonight, Marian?"

"I am going now."

"I should at least like to have my supper," the aunt cried. "I have had no dinner."

"I had forgotten," said the girl so simply that her aunt's heart was touched. "Can't you get something to eat now?"

"Aren't you hungry?" Mrs. Warner faltered.

"I? No!" She sat down by the window and looked out under the locusts and poplars on the lawn. "Hurry!" she begged, and it was the look of her face, wistful at last, which sent her aunt hastening away and brought her back again as quickly as her arrangements could be made. She had been gone a half hour, but Marian had not moved, and she shivered as she got to her feet.

A buggy waited at the gate; no questions were asked, no exclamations made; so far her aunt had smoothed her way. Cousin Tom, bareheaded, tucked the linen robe about her skirt with a little touch of reverence and a

prayer on the lips under his gray mustache for her and for the man, his neighbor, who was dear to him; and they drove off down the lane and along the country road.

It was past the sunset, and the fields were bathed in golden light, the chestnut rails stretched a dark line of zigzag into the distance, and the road was empty and desolate. The fence corners were choked with bramble, vine, and weed; the fields ran wild with purpling grasses; the pines, as they drove through the skirt of woods, sighed solemnly overhead; a patch of yellowing corn and of tobacco leaves marked the cabin they sped by, and again the pines were overhead, trees of sturdier growth and further stretches, where the vistas were already dusky and the great rough trunks close and dark.

Mrs. Warner cast fearful glances about her. "We must come back this way, and it will be dark," she said under her breath, as she leaned over and slapped the reins against the horse's back.

They came out by untended fields, where a house loomed desolate amidst old and untrimmed trees, and they turned in at the

sagging gate and drove slowly up the rough and rutty lane, the judge's wife feeling her heart pounding in her throat.

Far back, in a dense, even curve, the forest stepped sullenly aside to make way for the unkempt fields and ill-kept dwelling-house and stood in solemn guard over their low fortunes.

At the sound of wheels a negro came to the yard gate and stood there, the wonder on his face deepening to the point of stupor.

Mrs. Warner turned one swift glance towards her niece as they neared him, but Marian's face again wore the look of calm imperturbability which angered her aunt to the core.

Marian jumped down as soon as the wheels were turned. She would have passed the man except that he stood barring the way.

"Is Mr. Maynard at home?" Mrs. Warner called. "Is he better?" she asked quickly, before the man could answer.

"Yes 'm."

"Where is he?" asked Marian.

"He? 'Fo' Gawd, you mus' wait! Lemme see a minute! Whar in de kingdom come is 'Ria anyway?" He tiptoed up the porch and into the hall.

"He's sleep," he said briefly when he came back; "he's in de chamber. I s'pose —" the man was dumbfounded and did not know what to say or do. "He's up and dressed, an' he's been restin' on de lounge, an' he's gone to sleep. 'Ria ought to be 'round." But 'Ria, his wife and the judge's housekeeper, was down at the barn milking. He was helpless.

It was Marian who commanded. "I am going in!" She turned to her aunt. "You will stay here."

Mrs. Warner stood on the porch, her fastidious ideas revolting, as Marian opened a door closed on the hall and shut it behind her. The open doors back and front showed the hall's bareness. Hats and coats hung on the peg-rack on the whitewashed walls, and an old gun stood in the corner; the bare stairway to the upper floor looked as if it were seldom trodden.

Mrs. Warner sat down on the bench which was pushed close under the railing of the narrow porch. She saw the rotting plank of the floor and of the steps, she saw where the weeds rioted on the lawn, and the roses straggled, and the crêpe myrtle thrust up a blooming head

above bare branches; the laurel rose by her side drooped earthward from its climbing except for one lusty arm which had thrust its growth between the house and the sagging porch and had strewn the threshold with the scattered petals of its dying roses. Though she listened intently she could hear no sound except the clucking fowls quarrelling on the roosting-places in the yard and the distant lowing of the cattle at the barn.

She knew this was not Robert Maynard's home, that he dreaded it and would have sold it had there been any one to buy. His life was spent in the county town, in a small, fresh-painted house of two rooms, opening, each of them, on the courthouse square.

In the room where Marian had ventured was the hush of silence. Her strength had carried her no further than the threshold, and she leaned against the closed door, fighting for courage.

Her breath came in long gasps and the blood pounded in her veins. She had pictured anything but this, — the peacefulness of the room, the reddened hearth, the white walls, the simple, orderly furniture, the open window with the

breath of the fields blowing through, and the couch where Maynard lay asleep, his thin face pitifully white in the faint light, his limbs twitching nervously under the quilt of patchwork thrown over them.

She came closer, leaned over, and looked at him. His debauch was over, had ended days ago, and he lay at the turn between the thing he had been and slowly returning health. His face was worn and white, sunken and seamed.

He twitched nervously; his eyes opened in a wild flash of panic. Marian leaned breathless to watch the first flicker of expression. The wild look of his eyes softened into a dream-like glow.

"Marian," he whispered, and she sank by his side. "I have seen you so, a hundred times." He looked, looked, and then flung out his hand. "It's a cheat," he cried, "a lie."

"I know it, I know it!" said the girl bitterly; and it was then that he cried, "Marian!" and Mrs. Warner on the porch trembled as she heard.

The girl buried her face on the quilt folds, but he never lifted his wasted hand to touch

her. "Why have you come?" he asked coldly. He was too weak for anything but simplest speech and language.

"I do not know."

"Who is with you?"

"Aunt Emma."

"Where is she?"

She told him.

"Bring her here!"

She sprang to her feet. "I will not, there is something I must say."

"You said it, I think," with bitter sarcasm, "in your letter."

"I — I —" she began wildly; "there is not a word of that true."

"Open the book — there on the table behind you — see!"

There were some letters and a photograph between the heavy pages. "They are yours," he said briefly. "Take them!"

"I will not, I will not have them!" she cried as she flung them from her passionately, and the photograph falling face upwards, her pictured face and bare shoulders gleamed up at her from the white pine floor.

"And that paper, the thing it told?"

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

"I know nothing of it," she panted.

"And that man of whom you wrote?"

"He is nothing to me! nothing at all."

Robert Maynard turned his head. The look in his eyes as he scanned her from head to foot was calmly judicial. "Did you think you had lost your hold of me?" he asked.

Marian gave a smothered cry at the cruelty of it.

"Was it worth it, this?" He touched himself on the breast.

"No," she cried hotly, "no, you are not."

"I am not." The decision was unquestioned. "I am not worth playing with any more, I am a broken man."

"You are not, you shall not say it."

"And worst of all, the blight of my sin is on others." He said it wearily, as if it were the statement of a tragic fact.

"Why did you come?" he asked again.

Marian had turned from him as he talked. She leaned back against the table, steadying herself with her trembling arm. At the question the strength of her first impulse rushed over her again, her arms dropped to her sides, she came a step nearer, the color flaming in

her cheek and the light shining in her eyes. "I have come," she said, "to marry you."

Maynard half raised himself, fell back again, and the red swept from neck to forehead. "Take care," he whispered hoarsely, "take care."

She knelt by his side, and her light breath fanned his cheek. "I shall," she whispered, and then passionately, "Don't you see, don't you know? I love you, I love you. I never knew it until now."

"You are engaged to another man."

She had been engaged to half a dozen. How could she tell him?

"You had promised to marry him, *to marry him.*"

"I never would have done it, never."

"Marian," the solemn voice brought the tear-stained face up from the quilt fold in which it had buried itself. The judge put his hand on her forehead and searched her face with the look which had set many a conscience aquiver. What he saw there — it was not what he had dreamed. He had worshipped a divinity, the semblance of his own ideal; he saw simply a woman's face, the dawn of love in her beautiful

eyes. He drew her slowly towards him and kissed her on the forehead.

He had kissed her before. One was passion, but this was love. And in the depths of his being was quickened a fire which would burn him clean of the sin he loathed.

XXIX

MARSH and stream, cornfields and peanut fields, woods where the saw-mill slaughtered the pines or the trail of sawdust showed where they had lived and died; long level bridges where the tide rippled beneath, and the rushes, green and brown, stretched on and on until the water showed but a thread of blue between their borderings; marshes where the birds came fluttering up, brown whirls of wings, as the wheels went rumbling by; wet woods where the black water lay in the pools between the solemn cypress trunks, and strands of moss, clutching at the oak, foreshadowed the far-off south swamps; woods of young pine, their vistas filled with ferns and their fine branches etched against the blue; cabins where the women rocked on the porch, the dogs lay in the doorways, and the corn rustled in the wind; villages where the people stood to watch its flight; towns where it clanged noisily but speedily along the street:

past all these sped the "cannon-ball," swift as an arrow and as true.

Its flight was an exhilaration. Mr. Nottoway in his seat was as lighthearted as a schoolboy bent on a holiday. It was no new route to him. He read his paper page by page; his daughter studied the unwritten page outside of the window, — the flitting poles, the singing wires, the birds resting weary wings upon them, a glimpse of wayside life, and on. Some strange feeling born of the hour, of the motion, of the hum of the wheels, possessed her. "So we touch, so we part!" It was well when the clustering houses bespoke the city and the bustle of the station brought her to thoughts of everyday affairs.

"When does our next train leave?" she asked carelessly, as they made their way through the jostling crowd, past puffing engines and crowded coaches to the waiting-room.

Mr. Nottoway did not answer for a moment or two. Then he spoke drawlingly, as if there were no need for haste. "Well, I don't know."

Page laughed, the touch of carelessness was so characteristic of her father's holiday humor.

"How would you like to stay overnight?" he asked.

His daughter looked up.

"I see there is to be a concert. Suppose we go up to the hotel, take a drive about the city, have supper and go; how would you like it?" The amusement deepened in his eyes as he watched the color flashing up in Page's cheek and saw her wide, astonished eyes.

So it came to be court day when they reached the country town. The local train jarred and jolted all the way. At the little station there was no more sign of life than on any other day, but at the county seat, a mile or more away, the expectant stir had already begun.

The summer visitors at the hotel were gone, but the house was filled with flitting guests, — dentists bound on a practising tour through the country, waiting here to make engagements with the men who would by noon crowd the hotel lawn, the street, and the courthouse square across the way; physicians come to meet old friends and collect old debts; lawyers waiting for the trial of some case in the big brick courthouse; drummers ready to display their goods and sell them there, or to arrange a day for

bringing them to the stores of merchants along the country roads. The wide porch was already crowded with their wares; a trestle table far up at one end was hung with saddlery; at the very side of the wide front doors, flat on the floor, glimmered the glass and china and tinware from a hardware salesman's samples. In the big office, long tables under the front windows displayed boots, shoes, and slippers, and opposite them open sample cases bulged with underwear, flannels and wools, and cardboard sheets pasted with calicoes or silks.

Page was keenly appreciative of every feature from the moment they turned into the main street of the town, where the vehicles of early comers clustered about the store doors, and alighted at the shadowed little gate of the hotel lawn, and went across the crowded porch into the parlor. Here patient women who had come with their husbands for reasons they themselves could not have given, but which were born of loneliness and a desire for some part in what was to others a big day, had already begun their waiting which would last, with the solitary break of a dinner in the hotel dining-room, until the men, who had met un-

numbered friends, who had gossiped and jested and filled their hours both profitably and unprofitably, were ready to depart.

Mr. Nottoway paused at the door. "Page," he said apprehensively, "I think you had better have a room; the whole place will be crowded presently."

"It is crowded already," the host behind him assured; "just one room left. I will be glad to let you have that; it opens on the porch, too, and you can watch the whole sight if you care to."

He went into the office and came back with a heavy brass key in his hand. "If you will come with me I will show you right away."

The porch ran before both the old building and the new; two rooms opened on it at the further end, and the host put the key he carried into the lock of the first. Its quiet comfort was delightful. Page took off her hat and gloves, drew the low rocking-chair to the window at the front, leaned her arm on the sill and looked out. The shutters were drawn and the slats turned, so that she was unseen.

The lawn, thick-set with trees, looked but a part of the courthouse square, the road

dividing them; save that the trees across the way were older, gnarled and bent and broken, and that the grass grew high between the ancient trunks. The old brick courthouse, weather-stained, with its pillared front, stood amidst them solemnly, and the row of small offices and buildings along the side kept guard of it, its realities, its traditions, its things of yesterday and to-day. Men lounged at the open doors, in the brick-flagged porch of the courthouse, on the weather-warped seats of heavy planks, thrust between the mulberry trees a century and more ago and grown about until they seemed a part of twisted branches and bent trunks.

The teams were driving in rapidly, — shining buggies, covered carriages, and heavy farm wagons; horses well-groomed, and horses long-tailed, and burry about their fetlocks. The crowd grew; horses, men, carriages, boys, and dogs choked the spaces. The street was a jam except for a narrow way for late comers; the square, the lawn, were crowded with people, shifting, laughing, talking, the hoarse murmur of many voices filling the air with the sharp sounds of calls and laughter.

Suddenly Page leaned her forehead against the window slats.

Driving slowly up the lawn, between men and vehicles and horses, with a call to this man and an answer to that, came one man alone in a buggy. He pulled up outside the lawn gate, close to the iron links which hung from post to post and made the boundary, and standing upright in his vehicle, caught at the short rope which dangled from a bell hanging on a tall standard just inside and set the peals a-ringing. His well-set figure stood clearly out above the heads of the crowds pressing closely about him, and as he rang a murmur ran over the crowd, the murmur of a name from lip to lip, "Blakey! Blakey!"

At another moment it might have thrilled him; now he did not care. He had come late purposely, to avoid all that was not absolutely necessary; there was a part to be played here, and he would play it as best he might, but his indifference was deadening.

Another carriage pulled in behind him. Blakey saw in the faces of the men about him a new excitement. He turned. There sat Maynard, the reins flung on his dash-

board, awaiting the stable boy who had run up at the sound of the bell; his white face, sunken eyes, and the mouth under his heavy mustache were unreadable, inscrutable.

The crowd pressed closer. The murmur grew, in laughing tones, in serious ones; for where every man knows his neighbor and has known him since childhood, motives are quickly read.

"Speech! speech!" the cry began, swelled, and drowned the voice of the sheriff, at the courthouse door, with his long-drawn prelude of "Oyez! oyez!" and the singsong proclamation that followed.

The judge lounged carelessly in his carriage, a spark glowed in the depths of his black eyes, but he was silent.

"Speech! speech!"

Blakey had sat down in the buggy. He sprang to his feet at the second cry. He whirled again, facing the judge and the press of the crowd. He put one knee on the cushioned seat and steadied himself while the stable boy stood at his horse's head, and his voice rang out. The words tripped and stammered on his lips in his first eagerness; and then as he

caught the solemnity and the dramatic meaning of the moment, its intensity steadied him, jest rose to earnestness, the light words of his first sentences grew into those which framed and held lofty thoughts and deep emotions. Laughter and murmur died about him, men listened with eager ears, closer the faces grew until it was a sea of faces raised towards him. He remembered the governor's statements. From words which meant little or nothing he slipped into a discussion of national issues; from national issues to the part their state was playing; from the affairs of the state to those of their county. Closer at home, he bound his listeners with the spell of his brilliancy. They laughed when he pleased and grew serious at his word. Maynard nodded his head as he listened to argument and clinching jest; at the peroration he leaned back in his carriage, satisfied. This alone was worth that fight with himself, even if there were not that other memory in his heart, that vision shining between him and the eager faces.

And then Blakey ended as suddenly and impulsively as he began. He jumped down from his buggy and pushed his way amongst the

men chaffing and jesting to hide his emotion. He crossed the street, reached the courthouse square, and came face to face with Van Horton.

He stood speechless and would have turned with slight recognition, but Van Horton gave him no time.

"Blakey," he said instantly, "I thought you would be here. I came out only to see you. Can you spare me a minute or two?"

His insistency drove the other's hesitancy before it. "Jump in, will you?" He was standing by a small carriage. "It's too public here. Can you go down to the house with me?"

Something in his manner was compelling. Blakey assented and added stiffly, "I did not know that you were here."

"I came down a day or two ago. I heard of the crowd that would be here to-day and that you would be one of the orators."

"I made my speech rather earlier than I expected," said Blakey grimly.

"Well, it was a pretty effective one." Van Horton enlarged on some of the arguments.

"We credited you with being on the other side," said Blakey simply when Van Horton had finished.

"I fancy I did not know how I stood. I don't know now, but I have learned enough to wait awhile before pronouncing an opinion." He had begun frankly, but ended with a touch of the pedantic.

Blakey answered with a noncommittal exclamation as they left the town behind them and turned in at the gate, but his pulse beat quicker. If this should be true, if Van Horton meant to withhold his hand, one expected obstacle was gone.

He thought of it, and the warmth of the impulse which had inspired his oratory and had not yet died out were in his manner as he began to speak of the house they neared.

He spoke lightly, as to one who understood his allusions, but found his hearer absolutely ignorant. The emigrant father had left his traditions behind him, and his son was eagerly attentive to the stories which should have beguiled his youth.

Blakey told of the feast which Washington spread for Lafayette on that wide, level lawn when they joined forces for that memorable march on Yorktown; the story of the ancient cedars — mementoes of Holland and home,

three centuries and a quarter before. He led the way by box towering above their heads, and gnarled mulberries which had sprung up in the hedges and overshadowed them and died to bareness while the box flourished steadily and mingled its pungent leaves with the rough and uneven mulberry foliage; by the old locusts keeping guard over graves fallen to the primal levels. He told the legend of the white-robed maidens who danced there when one of the household must make his bed with the dead. He pointed out the avenue of hollies, huge as oaks, and the terraces beyond, where bulbous plants had flourished and where, even now, the tulips blossomed amongst the potatoes and the jonquils and narcissi flowered amongst the peas.

Van Horton, at his side, felt the first beginnings of pride in his ancestry, of love for the old traditions; and an intensity of desire to live up to and beyond them all, which was unreckoned on and undreamed of, stirred within him. He had intended, in getting Blakey away from the crowd, to speak only a few terse sentences; and hard as it had been to recognize the necessity within him for speaking

them, he had already begun to feel some glow of self-sacrifice.

In such a mood he had driven the short distance into town, had stood apart among the people, had listened critically, and bided his opportunity. The occasion was his own, plucked by his will; and yet the man he had intended to befriend because he felt impelled by a sense of justice and a strain of some finer feeling was giving to him an impetus which would grow and deepen until it should become the dominant power of his life.

"There are no tales of the old house?" he asked half shyly, as they ascended the worn steps.

Blakey stopped short in amazement to look at him. "You have seen the secret stairway?"

"Yes," Van Horton admitted eagerly; "it was the only strange thing I had ever heard of."

"And the haunted room?"

"Which is it?"

Blakey put his hand on a door and opened it.

"I sleep in it," said Van Horton simply.

He closed the door behind them and stood listening to a tale of murder done there, of a

huge dark closet and trap door and a black cellar beneath; of a choked tunnel under the terraces to the forest and to safety had the Indians attacked the house when it was new.

Blakey told it in a fashion which spared its horrors while accentuating each detail. "You have made few changes, I see," he finished. The worn furnishings of the room were much as he remembered them.

"None at all. I have n't had the heart to touch a thing. I knew nothing of the house when I came down; when my mother heard the old place was for sale she would have me buy it. I sent orders to have the outbuildings repaired, the fences put in order, and the land cultivated; but I wanted the house left until I saw it. I — I could n't tell you how strangely I have lived since I have been here."

"Van Horton," said Blakey in one of his quick impulses, "I have always wanted to see somebody here who would keep the place up, who loved it. You have the money, why don't you do it?"

His listener's luminous eyes lighted with a quick flash of emotion. "Perhaps I may," he said simply.

"Will you make many changes?"

"I don't know," began Van Horton hesitatingly. "My mother is coming down in the fall, and — and I am to be married then." The red ran up his cheek at the admission, and he looked full in his listener's face. His own cheek grew white as he saw how Blakey blanched and leaned heavily against the mantelpiece behind him.

Van Horton motioned towards a photograph which stood at Blakey's elbow. "This is my fiancée," he said in a voice kept evenly expressionless. "The picture is about the only thing I have added to the room"; and Blakey's impassioned gaze rested upon a face unknown to him.

It was of this Van Horton had felt compelled to speak. He had blundered on it, but he would be plain, concise, if the words could be found.

"I tried to tell you — that night, you remember — but — it was that I wished to speak of." He stood erect in the room with its faded furnishings and his voice rang true and clear. "However mad I may have been, Miss Nottoway would not listen to me." He had said it all in those few words.

Blakey looked down at the floor, the blood pounded in his veins, the breath choked in his throat; he raised his eyes, looked into Van Horton's face, and strode across to him.

"I thank you," he said, but Van Horton turned away. He felt suddenly that he had said and heard all he could endure.

"Shall I drive you back into town?" he asked in the porch.

Blakey scouted the idea.

"Then I shall say good-by now."

"You are not going to stay here alone?" Blakey stammered. "Come back with me. There are some men I would like you to meet, who would be glad to see you."

His listener stopped him. "Not to-day," he said wearily.

"You are going to live here, stay among us?"

Van Horton hesitated a moment. "I think so," he answered slowly.

"I shall be glad," said Blakey heartily, as he held out his hand. Van Horton showed no trace of remembering, but Blakey, as he felt his clasp, was swept by a memory; a hundred words crowded to his lips, but none were adequate;

he turned away. The turf was light to his foot, the sky was blue overhead, and the birds sang in the cedars.

Van Horton went back into his haunted room. Already the voices of the house called to him, and there was a dim foreshadowing of the day when their sound would shut out all others until he forgot that any other life had ever beckoned him but that full one which then should be his. But there was in his thought no foreshadowing of one fact this future held: that he would find his own interests mingling with those of the man who had just left him and advancing them, that they would face together broad questions of the coming day, and that out of their common interests would spring a friendship strong and rare.

Page, when Blakey's speech was ended, shrank back into her chair. She was throbbing from head to foot, yet felt she had played the spy. Not for her eyes was that scene played out under the thick shadowing trees in the midst of that hushed crowd.

It was a relief when a knock at the door brought her to her feet. The host stood there.

Would she come now into the dining-room? The ladies were served first, before the bell on the lawn summoned the men.

She hurried through the meal and back along the porch; she heard the slam of the door next hers as she turned the corner and saw a young man bending over the key. He straightened up and faced her, and his cheek grew as white as a woman's. It was Page who was most at ease, though she had determined beforehand not to meet Hugh Blakey, not to let him know of her presence; and she trusted to blind chance that he would not meet her father. But now she held out her hand, and he took it, stammering incoherent words as he did so.

Page moved towards her door and speech came back to him enough for present need.

"You are not going, you must stay and watch the crowd," he pleaded.

"I have been watching," said Page, and despite her attempt to hide it the laughter crept into her eyes.

Blakey crimsoned; for the moment he had forgotten his part in the spectacle. "It was good to see Maynard out," he defended himself. "I was swept off my feet."

"You carried most of the others with you, I think," said Page demurely.

Blakey had left her, renounced her without an effort. He who had spent the idle hours of his life in the diligent practice of love-making would not brook that the woman he at last loved should have upon the mirror of her heart even the breath of a fancy for another. His jealousy was deep enough to be a force. But this moment swept away the thought of it. He had only one desire — not to let her go.

"Come, sit down out here!" He hurried away, came back dragging a chair, and sat down on the edge of the porch at her feet, his back against a pillar. "No one ever comes this way. I ought to know! The days I have spent here and the nights! I have carried this old key in my pocket many a mile. You see I have been all around here, in and out of these roads. I have left at daybreak and gotten back at midnight," he rattled on, merely to gain time until Page should look at ease; should lean back in her chair and not look as if she were ready for flight each second.

"Queer crowd, isn't it?" he went on, "and queer old place?" He settled back against

the pillar and watched her face. Her pose was relaxed; he was sure of her now.

"Oldest place anywhere around here. This house — the old part of it — was a tavern when Washington was president."

Page's laugh rippled out. "And he stopped here of course."

"He did, he really did; it is a true tale. You see that was the post road," pointing to the crowded street.

"And Fairfax surveyed it?"

"You are right, you are an excellent historian."

"There was never a road in eastern Virginia which Fairfax did not survey, nor an inn at which Washington did not sleep."

"Well, you will believe this! Do you see that old ring of mulberries over there in the square, this way, just before you, and the benches grown into the trees? It is the old cockpit, where they matched their fighters, and there on those benches men watched when cock-fighting and not prize-fighting was the excitement of the ring."

He talked easily, scarcely conscious of his words; his thought was of her, of her amused

face and friendly eyes and the glimmer of gladness which showed in their shadowy depths as she looked down at him. He saw no lines of care on her face, no intangible sorrow. He searched for them as he talked. What he found were a steady thoughtfulness, a new dignity, and a trace of restlessness which he could not read, but which owed its birth to a memory of Betty Carroll's unforgotten words, which would thrust itself upon her even here.

Blakey looked and talked and laughed, and the lines of care smoothed out on his face and the resolve which fired his nature at that moment when he had faced the judge flared again within him.

It was no longer a question of yielding, of faint-hearted fight. The way was before him. What any other man had done he could do: he felt the power quickening in his veins; it thrilled in the tones of his voice, careless as was his speech; it pointed the way to victory. When a man wishes to succeed he must conquer first his fear of himself. This he had felt. He had been forced into a position which he did not wish, had taken it at the very ebb of his ambition, when one door was closed behind him and

on it he had read failure greater than he should have deemed it. What he had thrown into this fight was a forced growth, an exotic, wilting at the touch of disaster; now it struck sturdy roots into his being and lifted its branches into the sunshine of a dazzling hope.

When a negro came hurrying around the porch Blakey started. They had been so alone in that sheltered corner that he had grown oblivious of the crowd a few yards away.

"La!" the startled negro said under his breath. "I 's been lookin' for you, sah; I knew you was hyar. Dinnah 's ober an ebry las' one 's gone. I come to see whar you was," he hurried on apologetically. The keen scent of his race for a romance had instantly warned him. "But don't hurry," he backed away, "I 'll keep yo' dinnah, I 'll keep it hot for you."

Page was on her feet, laughing. The delighted waiter enjoyed the vision of dark eyes and fair cheek with the coloring of a red rose throbbing up in it as thoroughly as did Blakey.

"Oh no," she declared, "that would n't do! Good-by!"

She held out her hand and the waiter turned away. He would have liked to listen. "Name

o' Gawd," he said to himself, "what Marse Blakey gwine say? He look, he look like he feel a lot," he chuckled to himself as he hurried away.

But Blakey said very little. "When this thing is over I am coming to see you, whether I win or lose"; and then he threw back his shoulders, "but I shall win!"

He was sure of it, believed it for the first time.

XXX

ROBERT MAYNARD was one of the first to turn homeward. He drove towards the vision which had shone before him all that day, and he knew where he would find it; yet he made no undue haste. His horse, with her head loose at the check-rein, settled into the steady trot which had carried him many miles, and he made no effort to hurry her.

He leaned back against the cushions of his buggy, his eyes seeing no part of the shady road, nor the fields, nor the woodlands as he passed. It was as old a tale as the skies or the clouds, and in his heart was the memory of a new story and the warmth of a new dream.

He knew where he should find the vision, a girl waiting for him, leaning against a white-washed gate — but not his. He had sent her away on that wonderful evening when the frightened negro came in to light his lamp, and Mrs. Warner followed at her heels, to

meet as warm a welcome as his old friendship and his new relationship promised.

He held her trembling hand and looked into her perplexed eyes and thanked her for the service she had done him.

"You need not thank me," she flashed, "I would never have done it myself, never!"

The girl at the chimney place came up shyly to put her arms around her shoulders; and the aunt suddenly remembered that Marian had not offered her a caress since the days of her childhood.

"You must take her back," pleaded the man, "and take care of her."

Marian started and gazed at him with questioning eyes. She had no thought of leaving him. Some mad idea of minister and rites that very hour was in her mind and he knew it. He was talking to her as well as to his old friend.

"I am going home to-morrow!" Mrs. Warner announced, as if she had stood all she could before hiding herself in her home refuge.

"Oh no, not so far, I could not stand it."

"We must."

"Not for a day or two?" and there was that in his eyes and voice which demanded obedience.

"Then we must go now; it is dark. I dread that lonely road."

"I ought to be able to go with you."

"I would not let you if you could."

"I shall come to see you to-morrow. Yes!" in answer to her astonished look. "I shall get well *now;* good-by!" He held out his hand; his strength was almost exhausted.

Mrs. Warner walked to the outer door and stood looking on the shadowed yard and darkening fields.

"Do you think," he asked very gently, "do you think I would have permitted it, Marian? God knows what it would mean to have you here, to see you every hour, every minute; but I must make a fight for my manhood first. I will see you to-morrow," he added as he kissed the hand he held and sank wearily back on his pillows.

It was not the morrow on which he saw her, but the day after that. He had driven up to "Cousin Tom's" yard gate and announced to the women that he was going to court — Cousin

Tom was already gone — and he had found time to whisper a word to Marian to appoint a tryst he was sure that she would keep.

Towards that he drove. He saw the blue of her gown far down the road, but he drove no faster. The faint color born of excitement and fresh air upon his face deepened in his cheek and his eyes glowed under his cavernous brows, but he lounged in his seat as he had done all the way and the mare kept to her gait. He looked provokingly careless to the girl who awaited him, but his gaze devoured her from dainty shoe and tailored skirt and silken waist to her golden hair. Her eyes and mouth he did not look at, he would not. He was wondering to what he could liken her, that supple woman, with her exotic air, outlined against the wide gate and the field of corn. To no flower of garden or wayside growth — would that he could fit her to such in his thoughts! A rose? he shook his head and wished with all his soul it was her emblem; a violet? he smiled grimly at the fleeting fancy; an orchid? ah, he had it at last, an orchid by a country road side, a flower misplaced, — he told himself the truth, — and yet the flower for him.

He pulled the horse aside and turned the wheels close at her feet.

"Get in," he begged as she hesitated. "An invalid craves privileges, you know, such as this," he kissed the hand he had caught to assist her, "and this," and he leaned back looking at her, his eyes saying the things he was too happy to speak. The way was as solitary, the road as desolate, the fence stretched in as heavy lines ahead as on that other day when she had driven towards him, compelled by her heart, not knowing what she would find; but now the light was golden and the hour divine. The edges of the barren land and the corn of the full field rustled softly and musically, the pines sighed overhead, and all the notes of nature were set to music by that magician, Joy.

"You don't mind if I don't talk," he pleaded. "I have talked myself hoarse." For there had been a speech, after all, very simple, very straightforward; the judge had committed himself openly to his new course, and men stood by to see, many of them understandingly.

It was one of them he met as he turned back to leave Marian at the gate: a man driving homeward, his horse, long-tailed and rough-

haired, trotting loose in the shafts, the wheels of his buggy and the lowered top splashed with old mud and powdered with new dust. The neighbor stared as if he thought the vision by the judge's side would fade into the twilight.

"By George," he declared, leaning out of his buggy and looking back at them when they had passed, "By George! that's the prettiest girl I ever saw! Whew! where did she come from? Never heard a word of her being around here; and Maynard, where did he find her?" He leaned forward, his forehead seamed with thought, the reins slack in his hands.

"Land o' Goshen!" he cried to himself, "that's it! Why didn't I think of it before? Nothing but a woman could have pulled him up like that. Who in the name of wonder is she? I am going to find out."

Which was easy to do, also easy to share the suspicions, which his hearers quickly accepted, and which spread until they ran over the county side and at last came back to the judge. He smiled inscrutably at the man who dared to question him, and when pressed still further he answered, as carelessly as if it were a thing of any day, that he was to be married in a

month or two, as soon as he could straighten out his affairs (meaning the campaign on hand), he was not sure of the date just yet.

And he never dreamed how powerful a factor in swaying the people to his side was the love tale which his neighbors divined.

XXXI

"HELLO, Blakey! Won, did you? I had the news over the wire before we went to bed. Sat up, every one of us, until after midnight — like the picture of the politician's family, you know." Mr. Nottoway laughed, but Blakey crimsoned.

"Get down! Tom!" he called a man working near by, "take this team to the barn. Getting everything in shape for winter, you see," he added when Blakey was by his side; "cabbage all set out," he waved his hand to the brown furrows and the freshly planted dots of plants on the southern side. Beyond the brown field the rough broccoli and pale kale showed squares of coloring against the winter fields and the asparagus waved feathery plumes, crimson set with berries, in the salt air; on the other side of the white level road the strawberry acres ran to the river, the deep ditches like gashes bordering them.

The sky was as clear as crystal overhead, the wind, warm with a cool breath at its core, blew

softly over the sparkling river and the lowlands and beat against the young man's cheek.

"Going to turn things wrong side out for your party?" Mr. Nottoway accused the newly elected member, who asserted nervously that he was. He did not say in what manner it would be done; he had proclaimed that until he began to doubt his own reforms, and he put it away from him with a blessed sense of peace.

"Come down to settle up your affairs here?" And again the young man said he had. He was noncommittal also as to what these affairs might be, and he was more nervous and concerned than he had been that night, one week ago, when he waited to know what fate those ballots would tell. There he felt he had done everything to the utmost, here he had done nothing. He had written once or twice, he had sent some of his mother's roses, and he knew Page was at home. Through the strange contradictions of his nature this was all; this and the firm resolve to come, as he had said, when all was over. What he would say to her he had no idea. He had trusted resolutely to the influence of the moment, and now he was

fairly unstrung. He hid it under a stream of words.

"Heard about Tom Carroll? You have n't? Did n't know that that land company of his was booming up again? Yes, sir, that man in Denver has come to the front." He did not add that some correspondence he had found time to attend to even in the whirl of the last months had been a powerful agent in constraining him to do so. "It's going to be a success! I had my doubts before; I have n't one now. I would put every dollar in it I could myself, but this thing—" he pulled himself short. This was not the way to talk to a man whom he might — there was one blessed chance whom he might — be approaching soon on another subject. The very thought of that chance set his blood dancing.

"As for Tom, he — well his hours are easy where he is. He will have time to look out for a good deal of the company's affairs, and he will get paid for that; and then his own money, you know, — why his stock is worth twice what he gave for it already. Good thing it is, too, for a political job is a bad thing to depend on." Lord! would he never be done making a fool

of himself with such speeches. What could he say? He could n't keep quiet. He looked wildly about for inspiration.

"Come out all right this year?" he blurted.

Mr. Nottoway nodded. He was altogether too well satisfied on that subject to talk about it. "Thanks to you."

"Oh yes!" Blakey did not feel he had done anything for which to be particularly thanked, but if the man by his side thought so he was glad, very.

"And I have settled some problems, too. I will stick to white labor."

"When you can get it."

"Well, I have," he laughed contentedly. "The labor problem of this country may be settled by and by, but too late for me. At present it is a lottery, and that is all I will live to see. I shall use the brains God gave me to get something as near to a prize as I can."

Blakey was far too excited to discuss so momentous a subject. They had turned into the path across the lawn; no one was in sight.

"Mrs. Nottoway will be glad to see you," said his host at the door, "and Page — I wonder where she is?"

Blakey's eyes were quicker than the father's. "There she is on the beach." He turned and ran down the steps without a word of explanation. Mr. Nottoway stood watching him dumbfounded; the lazy lids which lowered over his eyes and belied his nature were wide open. He whistled softly and turned to look for his busy wife.

Swiftly as he strode, Blakey saw every detail as he passed, — the vivid green of the grass; the scarlet and yellow leaves of the maples fluttering through the air and drifting under their half-bared branches; the roses, few, but wearing such tints as summer never painted; and down by the beach the holly, thick-set with berries whose tinge was already red.

Page, under its shade, was sitting on the sand, her dreamy eyes watching the river. The curve of her mouth and the look of her face showed steady thoughtfulness. How awkward it was to come upon her so! He held his breath as he watched her. She moved restlessly under the magnetism of his gaze and he spoke her name, "Miss Nottoway!"

"Don't get up." He held out his hand, and if the touch of it were icy cold his trembled

as he held it. "I saw you from the porch," he stammered. "I have just come; do sit down again."

Page stood for one trying moment, her hands clasped before her. "I must congratulate you," she began formally.

"Oh, don't! I have heard enough," he added ruefully. "Come, sit down again and be lazy and happy."

"Do they go together?" she asked as she slipped down into her old lounging position at the foot of the holly and he threw himself at her feet.

"To-day."

"You must be humored of course." She leaned back against the gray tree trunk and looked at him with laughter in her eyes.

"Must I?" He drew a quick short breath. "I hope so."

"If you choose to build castles." She filled her hands with the dry sand and let it filter through, but her fingers shook.

"I choose to build — castles," he answered simply.

"Like mine?" she laughed.

"I hope so."

"They are hovels," Page went on lightly.

"Mine tower to heaven," he declared.

"You are ambitious." The ripple of the laughter at such nonsense floated out on the air.

"I am, I always was.

"Well," with a critical watching of the down drifting sand, "you ought to be satisfied."

"I am not." The voice was low.

Page had been looking away from him. She turned and gazed full into his eyes. "Not satisfied?" She clasped her hands on her knees and leaned towards him. "You have achieved the thing you wished, gained the object for which you worked; is there any happiness greater?"

She never heeded the passionate protest he made. She was looking now beyond him. "Suppose you had set your heart, your soul," she laughed shortly at the intensity of her language, "on some one thing, and then found it unattainable." She moved impatiently. What had made her speak in such a fashion, begin such a confidence? She set her red lips firmly; there was a mist between her and the river's flow.

Blakey turned his eyes away. He had seen

the quiver of her lips and the mist in her eyes; she had not forgotten! And over and above thought of himself was the keen cutting pain for her and the hopelessness of the memory she held.

He had not been altogether absorbed. He knew the romance the newspaper world had made of Van Horton's adventures, he had seen the skilful climax of his marriage, the plans of his future work, the story of the historical estate where he would make his home; and he wondered how much of it the girl before him knew.

She knew all, but it had not affected her. It was of a different thing she thought when she said briefly, "I am so disappointed."

"Disappointed?" Was that the word for such agony, Blakey asked himself dully. Quick as he was at most things, he did not grasp this.

The waving line of the far-off tide shook before his eyes, the sheen of the water blinded him, he pulled his hat impatiently lower over his face. As soon as he could do so with decency he would go, and then — but his thoughts went no further.

Page's fancy followed its own bent. "I have

been thinking, I scarcely know what to do, I am ashamed of myself, that I cannot plan some study, shape something for myself. I cannot go back this winter."

"To college?" Blakey's voice was rough. Was that what she meant?

Page looked at him with darkened eyes. "Of what did you think I was talking?" she asked haughtily.

"I? nothing — nothing —" He bit his lip and looked out at the river; and the shine of sunlight on it was no more dazzling than the light in his eyes. His thoughts were in a whirl. He was silent so long that Page moved as if to rise. "We had better go into the house," she suggested.

"No." He caught her hands, held them, and pulled her down close to him. "No, I must tell you — you say I am ambitious — I — I am! He was so eager, so vehement, the words would not come easily. "You wonder I am not satisfied. I am not. I want, when I go to Richmond, I want to go — oh!" with impatience at himself, "go with me, Page?"

She looked at him for a second, comprehension darkening her eyes and burning her cheeks.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L

"Oh," she said softly, and her lips trembled like a child's.

Blakey waited breathless. God! would she never speak? How the tide moaned and the wind rustled in the holly.

He let her hands fall slowly. "I see," he said hoarsely, "I see." The man who had made a practice of love-making so often that he knew every turn of the witching game stumbled to his feet.

Page followed mechanically and leaned against the holly. He could see the flutter of her breath at her throat. He strode closer, until he touched her, looking down into her face for the last time, he swore; at the red wistful mouth and pale fair cheek and lashes curled against them, accentuating their healthy pallor; at the hint of red stealing up to them; at the supple figure drooping from him, her small hands clenched at her sides. The fatality of it, that she should not care! A cry of bitterness was on his lips, but he held it back. "Good-by!" he said instead.

Her lashes fluttered up; wide-opened, astonished, her dark eyes looked at him.

"Good-by?" she faltered.

"My God!" he cried as he swung her from her feet and held her crushed against him. "Why didn't you speak? what is it you mean?" he begged hoarsely. He let her slip to her feet, his arms still about her.

"You love me?" he demanded, as if it were an oath he put.

How could she know? Once before idle fancy had made a rainbow around the world, and the rainbow had faded and left but the earth. She had put no meaning on the dreams, fed by warm praises from a loving friend's lips, which came afterwards; she had only wondered why she had not been unhappier at the reversal of her plans, and why the future seemed to hold some wondrous promise. Was it this? She answered his question truthfully, "I do not know."

"I do! Look at me!" and as he leaned to read the tale of her changeful eyes he kissed her as if it were a rite.

A man and a woman loitering at the library window saw not all, — the tangle of rosebush and shrubbery and trees shielded somewhat, — but they saw enough to guess the rest.

The woman turned white with anger. "Out there in the broad daylight! Mr. Nottoway, what on earth is he thinking of? Go out there! If he wants to — oh, my soul! Tell him to come into the house."

But he turned, amused at her horror. For the first time in years he was serenely satisfied as to his daughter's future.

"No," he said lazily, "I shall not"; and he leaned and kissed the woman by *his* side.

THE END

By the Author of "Where the Tide Comes In"

A GIRL OF VIRGINIA

By LUCY MEACHAM THRUSTON. Illustrated.
12mo. $1.50

A delightful present-day romance, with its scenes located in the Old Dominion State. "One could scarcely find a more delightful heroine than the pretty daughter of a professor of the University of Virginia, Frances Holloway, who is the same lovable, high-spirited young woman one so often meets in real life, but for some reason or other so seldom in stories," says the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat.* "The best story of college life from the townspeople's point of view that has been written in a long time."

"Not too light nor yet too tragic — with a wholesome out-of-door flavor," says the *Boston Journal*, while the *New York Commercial Advertiser* says "the author has given us a picture of modern girlhood that goes straight to the heart and stays there."

By the same Author

MISTRESS BRENT

A Story of Lord Baltimore's Colony in 1636
Illustrated. 12mo. $1.50

The story is an interesting study of the life of the colonists, and has seldom been excelled as a picture of early Maryland's history. — *Baltimore News.*

No more able or remarkable woman figures in early colonial history. The author has splendid material at hand and uses it with commendable accuracy. — *The Outlook*, New York.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS
BOSTON, MASS.

A Stirring Tale of the Plains

THE RAINBOW CHASERS

By JOHN H. WHITSON
Author of "Barbara, A Woman of the West," etc.
Illustrated. 12mo. $1.50

Full of the atmosphere of the West, with a cowboy, land speculator, and lover for its hero, Mr. Whitson's new novel, without being in the least a copy, has many of the attractions of Mr. Wister's hero, "The Virginian."

"The Rainbow Chasers" is a virile American novel and treats of the elemental forces of Western life and the results of the great fever of speculation in land. The prairies and forests of the West are the scenes which the author has chosen for a novel which is full of interest and strength.

The characters of the story are vigorous men, men with red blood in their veins, men of action who build up new communities.

By the Author of "A Prince of Sinners"

ANNA THE ADVENTURESS

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM, author of
"A Prince of Sinners," etc. Illustrated. 12mo. $1.50

Mr. Oppenheim's new story of London life shows this talented and increasingly popular author at his best. The subtle character study of two sisters, Anna and Annabel, is masterly. The latter "got herself talked about" when she and her sister lived in Paris, and when Sir John Ferringham proposed to her, believing her to be Anna, she keeps up the delusion. The consequences of this bold deception Mr. Oppenheim has unfolded to us with remarkable ingenuity. The story increases in interest as it progresses, and sparkles with brilliant conversation and strong situations.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS
BOSTON, MASS.

A New Romance by the Author of "The Shadow of the Czar"

THE VIKING'S SKULL

By JOHN R. CARLING, author of "The Shadow of the Czar," etc. Illustrated. 12mo. $1.50

Mr. Carling has written a spirited story of love and adventure, with an ingeniously constructed plot, which tells how Idris Marville, true Earl of Ormsby, recovered a treasure hidden by one of his progenitors,—a Viking of the Ninth Century,—and how he cleared the memory of his father, who had been wrongfully convicted of murder. There are many powerful scenes in the book and abundant love interest. The whole story is exceptionally strong, dramatic, vivid, and interest-compelling. It is a worthy successor to the author's remarkable and successful novel, "The Shadow of the Czar."

A Story of Modern Quebec by Miss Ray

BY THE GOOD SAINTE ANNE

By ANNA CHAPIN RAY, author of "The Dominant Strain," etc.
With frontispiece. 12mo. $1.25

A young Englishman, Cecil Barth, visiting Quebec on his way to a ranch, a New York physician and his daughter Nancy, a Canadian of English descent, and a young French-Canadian studying law are the chief characters of this charming summer novel, abounding in bright and interesting conversations. This pleasing story of the love affairs of vivacious Nancy, the heroine, has for a background the many places of interest in and around Quebec.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS
BOSTON, MASS.

The Story of an American Woman's Summer Abroad

A WOMAN'S WILL

By ANNE WARNER. Illustrated. 12mo. $1.50

A brilliant and entertaining love-story is this, narrated almost wholly in dialogue, the hero being a German of rank, and a famous violin player and composer, and the heroine, an American widow, whose marriage had been an unhappy one. The charm of the story is in the skilfully drawn characters, the bright dialogue, and the realistic painting of the scenes in which the events take place.

By the Author of "The God of Things"

THE EFFENDI

By FLORENCE BROOKS WHITEHOUSE. With illustrations. 12mo. $1.50

The Prologue of this engrossing romance of the Soudan deals with the siege of Khartoum and the death of the hero, Gordon, and the Epilogue with the retribution which England exacted from the Arab hordes. Between the two is placed a dramatic story of love and adventure.

The author of this stirring story has been highly praised for characterization and imagination, and for her knowledge of the Nile country.

Some New Stories by Sienkiewicz

LIFE AND DEATH

AND OTHER LEGENDS AND STORIES. By HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ, author of "Quo Vadis," etc. Translated from the original Polish by JEREMIAH CURTIN. Illustrated. 16mo. $1.00.

Contents: I. Life and Death: a Hindu Legend. II. Is he the Dearest One? III. A Legend of the Sea. IV. The Cranes. V. The Judgment of Peter and Paul on Olympus.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS
BOSTON, MASS.

THE PROPERTY OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY